PRODUCTIVITY SUPERHERO

Become the Most Organised and Disciplined Person You Know in 30 Days or less

- Dan Luca -

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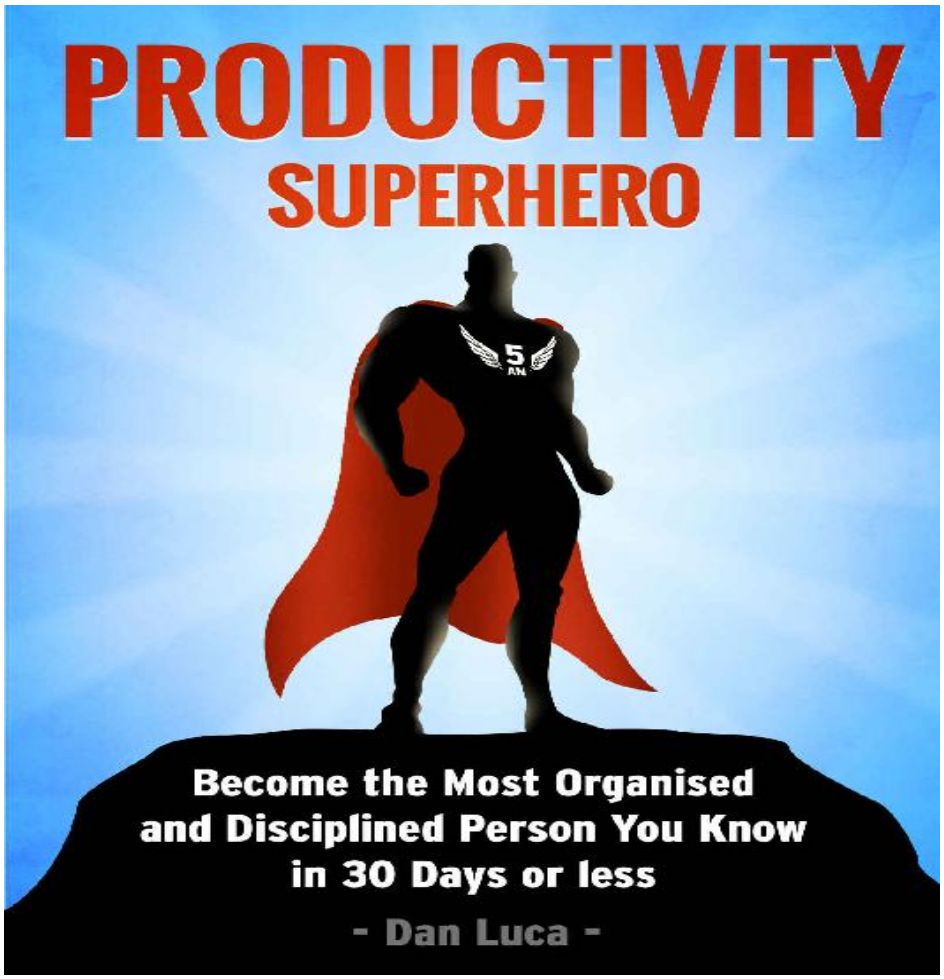
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Become the Most Organised and Disciplined Person You Know in 30 Days

DAN LUCA

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Introduction

The road to freedom through discipline

"Self-discipline is a form of freedom; freedom from laziness and lethargy, freedom from expectations and demands of others, freedom from weakness and fear -- and doubt." (H.A. Dorfman)

I'm one of those people who love discipline although I'll confess I wasn't like that from the beginning.

At first sight why would anyone love discipline?... At first at least, it seems like a limitation, a self-imposed constraint...

However... if you take a closer look, those who are disciplined are those who are truly free and those who seek to be free no matter the cost are the ones who are conditioned and restrained.

I really like the definition Steve Pavlina gives, that states something along the lines of:

"Self-discipline is the ability to get yourself to take action regardless of your emotional state."

And taking action is the fundamental characteristic of remarkable people.

These successful people also have a few other traits in common:

- They deliver what they've promised... every time!
- They finish what they started!
- They become better day after day because they study and practice.
- They have productive daily rituals and routines.

And if you closely examine each trait, every one of them is "screaming out" discipline. None of them would be possible in the absence of discipline!

Moreover, **each successful person knows that, if you don't control yourself, your circumstances will!**

For instance,

- You're not disciplined enough to pay your taxes on time, you pay the fine for being late.
- You're not disciplined enough to improve your English level, you're not promoted to a management position.
- You're not disciplined enough to take your car to the service station and investigate the yellow light on the dashboard, one day your car will stop running and fixing it will cost you more time and money.
- You're not disciplined enough to save 10% each month, you end up living without savings and in fear of the next day.

… and so on and so forth…

The late **Stephen Covey said that "The undisciplined are slaves to moods, appetites and passions."**

Long term, indiscipline will cause you to lack abilities that could significantly enhance the quality of your life (learning a foreign language, using text editing software, studying parenting skills etc).

Discipline also means to take action whilst also thinking of the long term consequences and not just how you feel short term. This means sacrificing a temporary pleasure for a significant long term benefit.

Concretely, **this shift in your perspective will produce the following changes in your unproductive behavior:**

- You'll continue to work on a project or idea even after the initial enthusiasm has worn off;
- You'll go to the gym even if you only want to sit on the couch and watch TV all day;
- You'll wake up earlier in the morning and you'll work with yourself for yourself;
- You'll say "No" when tempted to give up on your diet;
- You'll check your emails only a few times each day (instead of non-stop).

Discipline was also one of my weakest traits in the past. I missed many opportunities because I didn't have the necessary discipline.

But, I persevered and I'm thrilled to tell you that today I woke up at 5AM, exercised, ate breakfast and wrote this text.

Most certainly it would have been more pleasant to lie a little longer on my comfortable bed. However, I made the decision that this "pleasure" should subordinate itself to a higher one that has to do with my purpose in life.

I think discipline is that staircase anyone can climb when they've decided they want to escape their prison of mediocrity.

However, the good news and the bad news, at the same time, is that there's no middle ground... you either go up and start living a remarkable life or you go down and sink deeper and deeper in your disappointments and frustrations.

And for all of the reasons mentioned above, it's essential that you study and practice Discipline!

It's probably the best thing you can do for yourself and your children!

Become the most disciplined person you know and inspire others as well!

Honestly look at what results discipline has brought about in your life and what freedom – “I do what I want to, when I want to” – has brought you. Draw your own conclusions and act accordingly.

I wish you become a life-long friend of discipline!

Who AM I?

My name is Dan Luca and I am going to guide you through this potentially life changing journey.

I am an entrepreneur, a productivity expert, a work-life balance coach and a super-dad. For as long as I can remember, I've tried to get the most out of my life, my time and my effort. I went to great lengths, over a period of more than 18 years, to achieve the level of energy, clarity, and confidence that I enjoy today.

I'll share my personal story, but before that, let me tell you this:

First of all, congratulations for having the courage to make the first step in altering things toward a more fulfilling life and for investing the time, energy, and money to make it happen.

Secondly, I'll make sure that your journey through this course is gentle but steady as well as show you all the pieces and the ways to implement them so that this puzzle will fit nicely together in the end.

Thirdly, all the things that are in this course are science based, client tested, and time proven so that you will get all the advantages of our research, but without the hassle of testing. My thousands of clients are living proof that once you experience this change, you won't ever consider going back.

At each stage of the course you will get all the necessary tools, templates, and resources so that you can fully implement every bit of information.

What Drives Me?

For as long as I can remember, I have enjoyed helping people fulfil their potential and not leave all the goodness inside themselves to go to waste. In high school, I was the go-to person for little personal dramas. I always had a kind word and a strategy for my teenage friends. So, you could say that I was already a natural coach back then.

At the same time, I was passionate about flows, processes, and all kinds of improvements that brought about greater efficiency. It was natural that I would go on and do a business management course at the university.

Back then, way before knowing what I wanted to do with my life, I made a promise to myself: that if the management part would become my work, the people development part would remain a hobby.

For about 10 years this deal that I had struck with myself worked out pretty well and I explored a variety of positions, from being a Senior Buyer at a tech company to being a Financial Auditor in a Big 4 Auditing Company, to being a Project Manager at a Training Company, while at the same time keeping in touch with lots of different and interesting endeavours.

During that period, I witnessed and lived firsthand the 18-hour working days, a 7-days-a-week work schedule, as well as months on end of work without rest and recovery even for a single day.

So, I know very well what excess looks like. I know very well how it feels to lose all your friends due to an extremely tough workload. I know how it feels to wake up in the middle of the night simply because the figures don't balance on the spreadsheet.

This was one of the most important triggers that led me into the productivity field, but without the excesses and the imbalances. I knew great things could be achieved without sacrificing health, relationships or selling one's soul.

After some extensive soul searching, I realised that personal productivity could bring together my two lifetime passions: personal development and systems improvement.

As Walt Disney once said: The two most important days in your life are the day you are born, and the day you figure out why.

So, every day I cherish the moment when I realised what my life is about.

Let's begin! See you at the starting line!

How to Get the Most Out of This Book

After working with several thousands of clients, I am now able to clearly identify the patterns that ignite SuperHero Productivity in people, as well as those that block any chance of great results in the least amount of time.
As a consequence of my years in the Productivity trenches, I structured the book to follow these principles:

1. Bite sized information for a daily intake that is not overwhelming but easy to digest and implement right-away.
2. A 30-day approach that gives you enough time to implement and test ideas and see the changes happening in your own life.
3. World Class strategies, tools and exercises that are science based, time proven and client tested, so you don't have to sort out what's working from what's not.
4. The optimum mix of structure, discipline and motivation over the course of 4+ weeks:
    a. Monday to Friday strategies and tools for greater productivity
    b. Saturday a recap of the main ideas and an evaluation form to help you get a clear picture of the progress you have made over the last 7 days
    c. Sunday an inspirational story that is not giving you extra-work, but it's lifting your mood and keeps you connected to the journey.

Very Important!

My best advice to you is to sync as soon as possible with the rhythm of the book. For instance, read and implement Day 1 on a Monday, Day 6 on a Saturday, Day 7 on a Sunday and so on. Read one lesson every day and do the recomended work so you build your SuperHero Structure, while being highly motivated and disciplined.

Let’s begin!

Day 1:

What benefits do organization and discipline bring about?

"Discipline is the refining fire by which talent becomes ability" (Roy L. Smith).

Good morning!

Today is the first day of the 30 days dedicated to getting organized and increasing self-discipline.

I firmly believe that **the lack of Organization and Discipline represents the greatest obstacle to personal fulfillment**. I will explain why I believe this to be true later on…

But first of all, I believe a definition of discipline is necessary to establish a frame of reference.

I find myself best represented by the definition Steve Pavlina gave for discipline:

He said the following: **"Self-discipline is the ability to get yourself to take action regardless of your emotional state."**

And if I were to follow-up with what Discipline is to me, I would say *it is the ability to focus your available resources at the right time to achieve the desired result.*

Discipline is not that relevant if someone is not able to organize and prioritize activities.

As it turns out, smoking one pack of cigarettes a day is also a form of discipline and dedication.

Having discipline can also mean eating the entire contents of your fridge after 8PM.

It can also mean watching your favorite series daily… or complaining each and every day about how unlucky you are and how everyone's out to get you.

Obviously, this is not the sort of discipline I'm referring to.

I'm referring to the discipline that helps you evolve little by little every day.

I'm talking about the discipline to read between 10 and 20 pages daily.

I'm talking about the discipline to exercise for at least 20 minutes.

I'm referring to the discipline to say "Please!" and "Thank you!" after each human interaction.

I'm referring to the discipline of being grateful for all that you have and all that you are.

Discipline, like many other traits, is a two faced coin; one lifts you up and the other brings you down. Which one will you choose?

Because you could very well use a knife to cut a loaf of bread or kill a man… it's a matter of choice.

So, to answer the question **"What benefits do organization and discipline bring about?"**, I will give you the reasons why you'll most likely want to avoid not being organized and disciplined.

- When you're not organized – **you don't have clarity** and this means perpetual stress and constant procrastination.
- When you're not disciplined – **it's nearly impossible to achieve long term success** because this type of success requires the self-discipline to act out your plans regardless of the emotional state you're in.
- When you're not organized – **you have every chance of missing out on valuable details and pieces of information** and this, in turn, will quickly result in failures and disappointments.
- When you're not disciplined and organized – **you'll fail to respect your deadlines** and this will bring about more frustration and stress; moreover, your partners, bosses and coworkers will lose faith in you and your promises.
- When you're not organized – **you're paid much less than those who are effective at their jobs**; if it takes you 2 hours to do something that your coworker gets done in just an hour, then this means you're paid half of what your coworker gets.

- When you're not organized – **you work overtime to finish your tasks**, you get home late and your loved ones will not be happy about it.

TODAY's To-Do List! (Now's the best time to do it!)

1. Find your own personal definition of Discipline. You can complete the following phrase with 3-5 examples.

"I feel I'm disciplined when…"

"I feel I'm disciplined when…"

"I feel I'm disciplined when…"

2. Find your own personal definition of Organization. Similarly, you can complete the following phrase with 3-5 examples.

"I feel I'm organized when…"

"I feel I'm organized when…"

"I feel I'm organized when…"

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 2:

How well-trained is your discipline muscle?

“We must all suffer from one of two pains: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. The difference is discipline weighs ounces while regret weighs tons” (Jim Rohn).

Good morning!

Yesterday we talked about what Discipline and Organization are and aren’t. This introduction was necessary so that you could begin forming your own opinion.

Any idea or theory that you hear remains in the “what if…” category until it’s internalized by the one who hears it.

Your personal reasons will allow you to train your discipline skills because, in many ways, discipline is similar to a muscle. The better trained this muscle is, the greater the challenge it can overcome.

Of course, if at this time your discipline “muscle” is not that strong, we will focus on training it for the next 28 days until you’ll be able to rely on it completely.

And, similar to any training program, we first need to assess the starting point.

Below you'll find a couple of questions to think about when assessing your starting point:

1. Do you wake up at the same time every day? Even on weekends?
2. Do you make your bed in the morning?
3. Are you overweight?
4. Are you an addict? (coffee, cigarettes, sugar, alcohol etc.)
5. Is your inbox empty? (no unsorted or unread emails)
6. Is your desk organized?
7. Is your house clean and organized?
8. When you make a promise to someone in what percentage is that promise kept?
9. When you make a promise to yourself in what percentage is that promise kept?
10. Can you fast for 24 hours?
11. How often do you exercise?
12. How many hours of focused work do you have in a regular day?
13. Do you have clear, written goals alongside a plan of action?

14. How many hours do you watch TV each day? Could you not watch TV at all for 30 days?
15. How many hours do you spend on social media sites?
16. Are you in debt?
17. When was the last time you implemented a new (positive) habit?
18. When did you last give up on a negative habit?
    And lastly…
19. What's your perceived level of discipline – on a scale of 1 (min) and 10 (max)?

Now, after you have gathered some pieces of information regarding the aspects of your life where you lack discipline (or you don't), we'll begin working these next few days with the perceptions, tools and motivations that will help you strengthen your discipline muscle.

TODAY's To-Do List! (Now's the best time to do it!)

1. Answer the 15 questions.
2. Find at least 5 other areas in your life where you believe a higher level of discipline could help you improve the quality of your life.

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 3:

Limiting beliefs regarding organization and discipline

“Begin challenging your own assumptions. Your assumptions are your windows on the world. Scrub them off every once in awhile, or the light won't come in” (Alan Alda).

Good morning!

Yesterday we tested your discipline “muscle” to determine how effort-ready it is.

Today we’ll be talking about how most people self-sabotage themselves and don’t even give themselves a chance of becoming disciplined. This happens mostly because they tend to have negative associations with what discipline represents.

At its core, the word “discipline” was used by ancient Greeks and it refers to the instructions given to disciples so that they may learn a skill or perform an action. It also refers to a certain code of conduct.

And yes, it can be perceived as a manner of following what those who are higher in rank in the hierarchy tell you to do.

But let’s do a small imagination exercise!...

Let's replace that external stranger (master) with your own inner master!

Let's replace that external someone that wishes the best for us with our internal master that seeks our highest well-being!

Let's replace external constraint with internal dedication!

It looks a bit different, doesn't it?

A suited metaphor for this conversion is as follows:

"A diamond is a piece of coal that was exposed to an extraordinary amount of pressure"...(read extraordinary discipline).

Then, if the practice of discipline brings about so many benefits, why is it so difficult for us to become friends with "it"?

To answer this question, we need to analyze the **limiting beliefs regarding Discipline that create this "difficult relationship"**.

I don't know which belief resonates with you in particular, but I will approach them one by one and "dismantle" them all...

1. Discipline is a limitation on freedom!

False!

"Self-discipline is a form of freedom. Freedom from laziness and lethargy, freedom from the expectations and demands of others, freedom from weakness and fear—and doubt. Self-discipline allows a

pitcher to feel his individuality, his inner strength, his talent. He is master of, rather than a slave to, his thoughts and emotions" (H. A. Dorfman).

2. If I'm disciplined I'm no longer spontaneous!

False!

When you're disciplined you can be spontaneous by choice and not because you're forced to! The undisciplined live with the sense that they're free to do what they want when they want.

I believe they're free to adapt and react to what others are doing! Being disciplined when you need to "build" is different than being creative when you need to solve problems.

Without being able to make a decision and if you're lacking the discipline to build... what's left is a lifetime of fires that need to be put out and an endless stream of problems that need to be solved and that will ultimately hold you back. Decide for yourself what path you'll choose...

3. I've had a few successes... I can take a break...

False!

Discipline is like a muscle. If not exercised, it atrophies and loses its effects. Each interruption warrants an exercise in willpower to resume productive and disciplined habits.

Avoid, as much as you can, the trap of “just this time”… Each exception not only atrophies your discipline but it also weakens your self-esteem because you know you were weak and gave in (even if it was just that one time!).

However, when you don’t give in, you strengthen your self-esteem and the certainty that you’re in control of your own life!

4. I want to become disciplined but those around me get in my way!

False!

Being disciplined is, first and foremost, a personal decision that you make. And just like any promise that you make to yourself, you can either keep it or break it. It’s possible to find yourself in a challenging environment where freedom (read “chaos”) reigns peacefully.

It’s simple! You have a decision to make; you either control the environment or you’re controlled by it! As soon as it becomes obvious to you that you don’t want to be controlled, you’ll make the necessary adjustments to act in a disciplined and ordered manner.

5. I can’t be disciplined because I lack willpower!

False!

Discipline is especially a structured and clear way of thinking. External discipline starts with internal discipline.

Discipline is what decides “what” things will get done and “how”. Only afterwards will your “willpower” spring into action as the muscle that executes what the disciplined mind has decided. This muscle doesn’t act when it lacks the orders that it receives from the mind.

TODAY’s To-Do List! (Now’s the best time to do it!)

1. Carefully re-read the limiting beliefs regarding discipline and identify those you resonate with. Find your own arguments to refute your initial perception, the ones that will help you become more organized and disciplined.

2. Think about different areas in your life where you lack your desired level of discipline. Identify the story you tell yourself to “justify” this lack of discipline. Send me your “stories” and I promise to disprove them. (dan@thebasicfundamentals.com)

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 4:

The higher purpose that fuels Discipline

“Nothing splendid has ever been achieved except by those who dared believe that something inside them was superior to circumstance.” - (Bruce Barton)

Good morning!

Yesterday we talked about how perceptions can be major obstacles when it comes to implementing the habits of being organized and disciplined.

Today we’ll talk about how all of these obstacles can be overcome when you have a good enough reason to do so!

Yesterday we discussed the paradigm shift from external constraint to internal dedication. We also touched upon the opportunity to connect with your inner master (your authentic self) and overcome the temporary shortcomings brought upon by applying discipline.

Jim Rohn said it very well:

“We must all suffer from one of two pains: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret. The difference is discipline weighs ounces while regret weighs tons.”

However, if you wish to suffer the pain of discipline with a smile on your face, it's absolutely essential to clarify your final goal, destination, or reward.

So, let's do a short exercise through which you can clarify "why being disciplined is worth it."

We will be working with our 4 intelligences: body, mind, emotions and soul.

For your body:

How do you see yourself in 20 years?

What level of energy would you like to have?

How do you perceive yourself health wise?

Ok, now ask yourself the following question:

If you keep doing what you're doing right now... what are your chances of fulfilling the "vision" that you have regarding your body?

For your mind:

What level of productivity would you like to have 20 years from now?

What level of mental clarity would you like to experience two decades from now?

How disciplined and organized do you wish to be?

Ok, now ask yourself:

If you keep doing what you're doing right now... what are your chances of fulfilling the "vision" that you have regarding your mind?

For your emotions:

What is the level of quality you would like to have with your spouse and children 20 years from now?

What is the level of quality you would like to have with your friends?

What is the level of self confidence you wish to have two decades from now?

Ok, now ask yourself:

If you keep doing what you're doing right now... what are your chances of fulfilling the "vision" you have regarding your emotions?

For your soul:

What career would you like to have 20 years from now that will fulfill you and fill you with significance?

How would you like to contribute to the increase in the quality of life of your peers 20 years from now?

What will be the level of gratitude and harmony you will experience?

Ok, now ask yourself:

If you keep doing what you're doing right now… what are your chances of fulfilling the "vision" that you have regarding your soul?

You'll most likely notice that there's a distance – quite long for most people – between what you desire and where you're starting from.

And with **a little bit of soul searching, you'll remember that all of the significant progress you've made in your life has been the result of consistency and dedication… in other words… Discipline!**

Discipline goes hand in hand with productive habits and we'll study and practice them quite a bit during this course.

But, until then, I'll leave you to answer the questions regarding "the best version of yourself," which you would like to experience 20 years from now.

TODAY's To-Do List! (Now's the best time to do it!)

1. Sincerely answer the questions regarding the 4 intelligences.

Reach healthy conclusions and clarify the realistic outcomes that will come to pass 20 years from now if you don't change anything regarding what and how you're doing what you're doing right now.

2. Find the reasons why "it's worth it" to be disciplined; at least 2 reasons, for starters.

Let me give you a couple of personal examples:

- **I was inspired by my grandfather who, at 90 years of age, had the necessary health and energy to play with my 2 boys- his great-grandsons.** This is why I exercise in the morning, I drink water as well as eat a healthy breakfast.

- Another example why it's worth it for me to be disciplined is that through everything I do, **I want to convince hundreds of thousands of people to wake up at least an hour earlier each morning and dedicate this time to themselves.** The potential of this single habit is immense… (hint: my first book "The 5AM Revolution: Why High Achievers Wake Up Early and How You Can Do It Too" reached #1 in the Time Management category)

- Another example is that **I want to be an impeccable role model for my two boys.** I want to give them the opportunity to enjoy the best version of their father and I don't want to burden them with my unsolved issues. This motivates me to work with myself on a daily basis to eliminate limiting beliefs,

distorted perceptions, fears or any other constraints I might pass on to them consciously or unconsciously.

Well then... I have a feeling you have some work to do as well... don't let me keep you :)

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 5:

What would your life be like if you stopped using excuses?

“Don’t be afraid to be extraordinary!” (Tut Irwin)

Hello!

Yesterday we went on a journey through time so that you might have the opportunity to visualize the future that you desire. Also, I hope you have started to see more clearly the difference that Discipline can have in your life.

Today we’ll be moving on and we’ll be talking about **the stories we tell ourselves to keep us in place so as to avoid change and progress**. They’re also the reason why we fail to accomplish our goals and we lack discipline.

Wayne Dyer identified the most common 18 excuses people tell themselves to remain small and insignificant… They’re the most common 18 stories we tell ourselves to avoid bruising our egos through failure.

Unfortunately however, **these are the exact reasons why we fail to move forward to reach our full potential and why we don’t inspire others to live their lives fully as well.**

I’m curious to see which ones are your favorites…

1. It’s going to be hard

- It certainly won’t be easy… but is it important enough for you to invest the necessary time and energy?

2. It’s risky

- Every step forward requires a certain amount of uncertainty. Make smaller steps to diminish the risk but keep moving forward.

3. It’s going to take a long time

- It might take a while… but you know what?… Time will pass no matter what you do… even if you start doing what is right, even if you don’t… time will pass either way!

4. It’s going to create family drama

- The only drama that already exists in your family is the fact that you are not living up to your true potential. You’re not allowing yourself to be all that you can be and you’re also not allowing those closest to you to do the same.

5. I don’t deserve more

- Of course you do! And if you analyze your past, even if you were using this excuse, you received much more in many ways. It’s true, maybe you didn’t receive as much as you could have, but at no moment in time did you experience the

river of life drying up and failing to flow towards you bringing with it even more.

6. It's who I am

- Wrong! It's who you are now… and, with each passing second, you change little by little. Were you the same person a week ago? A month ago? 5 years ago? You don't stand a chance to stay the same… so stop clinging to this false perception.

7. I can't afford it

- This is a very toxic belief that has its roots in the past. Your future will be the same as your past only if you want it to be that way. I would suggest a small but powerful adjustment for this limiting belief: "I can't afford it… yet!" Ask yourself afterwards "What could I do to afford it?"

8. No one will help me

- Of course no one will help you if you don't ask for help! This belief, by itself, has the power to become a self-fulfilling prophecy – "I have this belief, I don't ask for help… and, what do you know?… No one helps me!" As soon as I hear this phrase, I immediately ask the person "How many people have you asked for help?"… and I think you can guess the answer I normally receive.

9. Things have never gone my way

- “Never”, “Always”, “Every time”… these are negative generalizations and they are the greatest enemies against personal growth. Let me ask you this “Never?”, “Always?”, “Every time?”… The answer will obviously be “Not really”… Change your perception to change your reality. Even Dyer said “When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change!”

10. I’m not strong enough

- This belief makes me smile! How did you conclude that you weren’t strong enough? When was the last time you gave it your absolute all and failed? Remember… your ego doesn’t want to get bruised… but, most times, your self-confidence will appreciate a victory even at the expense of a bruise you received outside of your comfort zone.

11. I’m not smart enough

- You don’t have to be! There are so many people out there who have already made it and who could teach you how to do it as well. No matter the challenge you face, there’s certainly at least one other person who has faced the same challenge and overcame it. Seek that person out and you’ll find the solution without having to invent it yourself.

12. I’m too old

- You mean to say you have a lot of experience? Does it require a physical effort you can’t manage? Find a young

man, place him under your wing, inspire him and let his enthusiasm do all the work.

13. I'm too young

- This could have been a good excuse… if the World Wide Web hadn't existed. Now, no matter how young you are, you can set your ideas in motion in simpler and faster ways than ever before. The internet offers equal opportunities for everyone.

14. It's overwhelming

- To me this sounds more like "I do lots of unimportant tasks and I don't know how to prioritize". Study productivity, clarify your priorities, identify the tasks that generate the highest value, and commission the rest.

15. I don't have enough energy

- This is my favorite excuse when I hear it during my coaching sessions. It can be solved in 3 easy steps. Go to bed at 10PM. Wake up at 5AM. Use the time between 5AM and 7AM to take a walk, exercise, drink water and eat a healthy breakfast. I'll guarantee you'll have top-notch energy the entire day!

16. My family history is to blame

- When I hear this excuse I ask people "Do you want your children to say the same thing about you? That because of you they missed out on life?" Even if your family's past is not

an easy thing to bear switch gears. Take full responsibility and change things so that the legacy you'll leave your children will be a healthy one.

17. I'm too busy

- Often when I hear this excuse I smile and ask "Busy doing what?" 9 times out of 10 the answers I receive are comprised of superficial and highly emotional arguments that essentially translate into "I don't know how to organize myself and I lack discipline". As you already know, by studying these two abilities, you increase the quality of your life.

18. I'm too scared

- I'm going to let you in on a little secret: we're all afraid when we're doing something for the first time but some of us choose to act despite our fears. The moment that you face your fears is when you feel most alive because it's in those moments that you feel you're obviously evolving.

It's possible that your excuses are a combination of some of the 18 mentioned above or you might even have a personalized version for the excuses that you tell yourself.

If that little voice in your head tells you "My excuse is unique, it's not amongst the 18 so there's still no solution for it"... I advise you to practice the following exercise, which is comprised of a couple of consecutive questions:

1. Is what I'm telling myself true? Is it really true?
2. Do I want to take full responsibility for everything that happens to me?
3. What will happen if I keep believing the story I tell myself?
4. What would my life look like if I stopped hiding behind excuses?
5. Can I find a rational reason to change?
6. What's the first step?

And, like any practice, it will become more and more effective if applied more and more often. Give yourself the chance to escape your excuses this way...

TODAY's To-Do List! (Now's the best time to do it!)

1. Carefully read the 18 excuses and identify the 3 that you use most often. Starting from the arguments I gave you, find at least 3 other ways of looking at your excuse from the opposite angle (find ways to dismantle your excuses rationally).
2. Practice the 6 question series on another 3 excuses that are currently holding you back. They can be either a part of the 18 excuses mentioned above or a part of those "special and personal" excuses you haven't found on Wayne Dyers list.

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 6:

Weekly evaluation no. 1

“Be yourself, everyone else is already taken.” (Oscar Wilde)

Hello!

Our first week has come to an end!

And because it’s a Saturday morning, **you’ll find 2 things in this email: a weekly summary and an evaluation questionnaire regarding the progress you registered.**

Read the main ideas and answer the questions to complete the first week.

Ok, let’s see what you’ve learned this week.

Day 1: What benefits do organization and discipline bring about?

Essential idea:

We’ve identified what a beneficial discipline means and what harmful (but disciplined) habits mean. Also, you’ve found your own definitions for Discipline and Organization.

Day 2: How well-trained is your discipline muscle?

Essential idea:

You've answered the 15 questions that will help you paint a clear picture regarding how well-trained your ability to be disciplined is at this time.

Day 3: Limiting beliefs regarding organization and discipline

Essential idea:

I have dismantled the harshest 5 limiting beliefs regarding discipline. At the same time, I invited you to send me other constricting perceptions you have regarding discipline… so I can break them as well.

Day 4: The higher purpose that fuels Discipline

Essential idea:

We went on a journey into the future, 20 years from now, through which you painted a picture of what you would like your future to look like when it comes to your body, mind, emotions and soul. Of course, the essential resource required to reach the desired destination was… discipline.

Day 5: What would your life be like if you stopped using excuses?

I deconstructed the most frequent 18 excuses people tell themselves to avoid leaving their comfort zone and experiencing failure. Also, I gave you a set of 6 questions that will help you break apart any other "special excuse" you might have…

Ok, now **let's see how well you navigated your first week:**

1. On how many days (out of 5) did you practice the exercise for each lesson? (0-5) >
2. How many minutes, on average, did it take you to complete the daily exercise? >
3. What topic from these first 5 days have you found most relevant or revealing? Why? >
4. How happy are you with the progress you've made? (1 – not happy at all; 10 – very happy) What was required to happen so that your score would have been 1-2 points higher? >
5. How dedicated are you to continue to improve your level of organization and discipline? (1 – not at all; 10 – very dedicated) >

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 7 - Sunday Story:

The true story behind Rocky

Not a lot of people know this, but due to complications during labor, **the lower left side of Stallone's face is paralyzed**, including parts of his tongue, lip and chin. This incident at birth is **the cause of his trademark snarling look and his slurred manner of speaking**.

For the first five years of his life, Sylvester Stallone bounced from one foster home to another while his parents fought and squabbled endlessly in a bad marriage.

Although he was eventually reunited with them, his troubled past and his oddly paralyzed face made him an outcast among his classmates. He often received suspensions for his frequent fights, poor grades, and behavior problems.

His adult life was just as difficult. Hard times and a lack of income resulted in the actor getting evicted from his apartment. As a result, **he was forced to live on the streets for close to three weeks**.

Eventually, he came across a casting call for a soft core pornography film; out of desperation, he attended the casting call. For a two-day filming period, the actor received $200.

According to Stallone **"it was either do that movie or rob someone, because I was at the end, the very end of my rope."**

He made the decision to try his hand at writing various screenplays. However, he found himself broke once again. In an act of desperation, he waited outside of a local liquor store asking people if they would buy his dog, Butkus; his closest and best friend. In the end, someone bought his dog for roughly $50. Stallone was extremely devastated that his life had come to that point.

Two weeks later, **the historic fight between Muhammad Ali and journeyman boxer Chuck Wepner** inspired Sly, as Wepner hung around for 15 rounds and even managed to knock Ali to the ground in round 9.

That match **gave him the inspiration to write the script for the famous movie, Rocky.** He wrote the script in 20 hours! He tried to sell it and got an offer of $125,000 for the script. But **he had just one request. He wanted to star in the movie**. He wanted to be the main actor, Rocky himself. But the studio said no. They wanted a real star such as Ryan O'Neal, Burt Reynolds or Robert Redford.

They said he "looked funny and talked funny". He left with his script. A few weeks later, the studio offered him $250,000 for the script. He refused. They even offered $350,000. He still refused. They wanted his movie, but not him. He said no. He had to be in that movie.

After a while, the studio agreed, gave him $35,000 for the script and let him star in it!

The first thing he bought with the $35,000? The dog he sold. Yes, Stallone loved his dog so much that he stood at the liquor store for 3 days waiting for the man he sold his dog to. And on the 3rd day, he saw the man coming with the dog.

Stallone explained why he sold the dog and begged for the dog back. The man refused. Stallone offered him $100. The man refused. He offered him $500. And the guy refused. Yes, he refused even $1000. And, believe it or not, Stallone had to pay $3,000 for the same dog he sold at $50 only! And he finally got his dog back!

The rest is history!

As you probably know, **Rocky became a worldwide commercial success and Oscar winner.** The film was nominated for ten academy awards in all, and went on to win the academy awards for Best Picture, Best Directing and Best Film Editing.

The sequel, Rocky II was released a few years later and also became a major success. **The film series has grossed more than $1.25 billion at the worldwide box office.**

The moral: Follow your instincts. Don't give up on your plans. Go all the way! Be your greatest fan!

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 8:

The three enemies of organization and discipline

“Order and simplification are the first steps toward the mastery of a subject.” (Thomas Mann)

Good morning!

Last week we talked about how a life without excuses would look like and we dismantled the most common excuses.

Today, on this first day of the second week, we actually roll up our sleeves and effectively dive into the topics of organization and discipline.

Throughout the first week, we analyzed the general framework, the motivations and significance you offer to these two aspects of your life.

Consequently, today we’ll be approaching what can sabotage your organization and planning… and ultimately your productivity.

And let’s begin with a very interesting piece of information:

The studies regarding work productivity have shown that a person works at his job, on average, less than 49% of their effective work hours.

This diminished percentage is mostly influenced in a negative way by the often internal (created by yourself) or external (coworkers, bosses, suppliers, customers) interruptions.

And if this unwanted situation is so largely spread out, it generates a couple of consequences: the other half of a persons' potential is not reached, half the possible sales are not finalized, and half of the possible income is not earned!

An essential element of any productivity system – whether it's professional or personal – is the existence of a balance between effectiveness and efficiency.

Simply put, **effectiveness means doing things well and fast.** You're effective when you fulfill a certain task – important or not – in the most economical way possible.

Efficiency means doing the right things. You're efficient when you do the tasks you need to be doing to reach your goals.

The general consensus is that if you're effective, you're also efficient – which is not always true. You can keep busy all day long talking on the phone, holding meetings, sending emails only to realize at the end of that day, week or month that you haven't done much at all.

It's good to keep in mind the following two ideas regarding effectiveness and efficiency:

1. If you do an unimportant task well that task doesn't become important.

2. The fact that a task requires more time does not make it more important.

It's useful to see these distinctions when deciding how you're going to invest your time so that your decisions will bring about better results long term. Moreover, you need to pay attention to these **3 perverse enemies of productivity:**

1. Frequent interruptions

When an interruption occurs, your mind is sent wandering in another direction. The mind then wastes a lot of productive time to return to what it was doing before being interrupted, to reenter the right state and to resume generating optimal results.

Your mind needs at least 10 minutes to focus on a medium-to-high complexity task and at least 10 minutes as well to change the context. So, every time you change contexts, you lose, on average, between 10 and 20 minutes.

2. Start & Stop

This "enemy" is connected to those frequent interruptions but it's also an effect of a lack of planning regarding the activity that you wish to finish.

For instance: I need to work with a coworker for the common project of the two departments. I usually see my coworker at his

desk and most times he’s open for conversations.

My assumption is that he’ll be available anytime to work together for an hour for the project. Consequently, I don’t talk to him to set up a date and time for our meeting. And when I seek him out to work together, I find out he’s not available… hence I start… and then I stop.

3. A succession of tasks unrelated to each other

For instance: I answer a coworker’s email, then I call a supplier, then I have a meeting with a department chief, I answer another email, I call a customer, I talk to my boss etc.

This succession of tasks entails an enormous amount of time wasted to enter and exit the optimum state of performance. Moreover, it generates a high level of stress… which in turn gives rise to the feeling of being overwhelmed.

TODAY’s To-Do List! (Now’s the best time to do it!)

1. Take 5 minutes and analyze your To-Do List for today. Do you need to shift your priorities to be both effective as well as efficient? How can you make sure you’re going to meet both requirements?

2. Analyze your personal level of productivity: count how many times you’re interrupted daily by external factors whether it’s a coworker, a phone call, an unread email, an impromptu meeting etc.

3. Count how many times you interrupt yourself – in an unscheduled manner - from what you were doing. It could be remembering something you forgot to do, or maybe you find yourself suddenly hungry or thirsty, maybe you realize your eyes or your back are hurting. Count how many times you interrupt yourself.

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 9:

Criteria for establishing daily priorities

“We are not what we know but what we are willing to learn.” (Mary Catherine Bateson)

Hello!

Yesterday we talked about the 3 enemies of productivity and how you can become effective and efficient.

Today we’ll be talking about **the simplest way of setting priorities so that we’re not just effective at what we do but efficient as well.**

For this purpose we’ll be using the Priorities Pyramid model, which is very simple and clear. By applying its principles, you’ll always be able to tell if what you’re doing is the best thing you could be doing at that time.

The Priorities Pyramid Model has 4 levels and the following characteristics:

Level 1: Added value for your entire life (personal level)

Health and vitality – rest, exercise, relaxation, nutrition, breathing, stretching.

Harmonious relationships and spending time with the most important people in your life

Growth and development activities that help you achieve your mission in life.

Or combinations of the 3 mentioned above: you watch a good movie with your children, you discuss future plans with your spouse, you have dinner with a friend at a vegetarian restaurant etc.

Level 2: High added value per hour (professional level)

The activities that have a high added value per time unit can be divided into 2 categories:

Time spent on preparation: reading, planning, strategic thinking, networking, creating systems, prospecting.

Time spent on performance: sales, negotiations, coaching, sales writing.

The two parts of this level can be seen as the training and the game or as the seed and the fruit.

Level 3: Low added value per hour (professional level)

The activities that have a low added value per time unit are mainly related to **maintenance:**

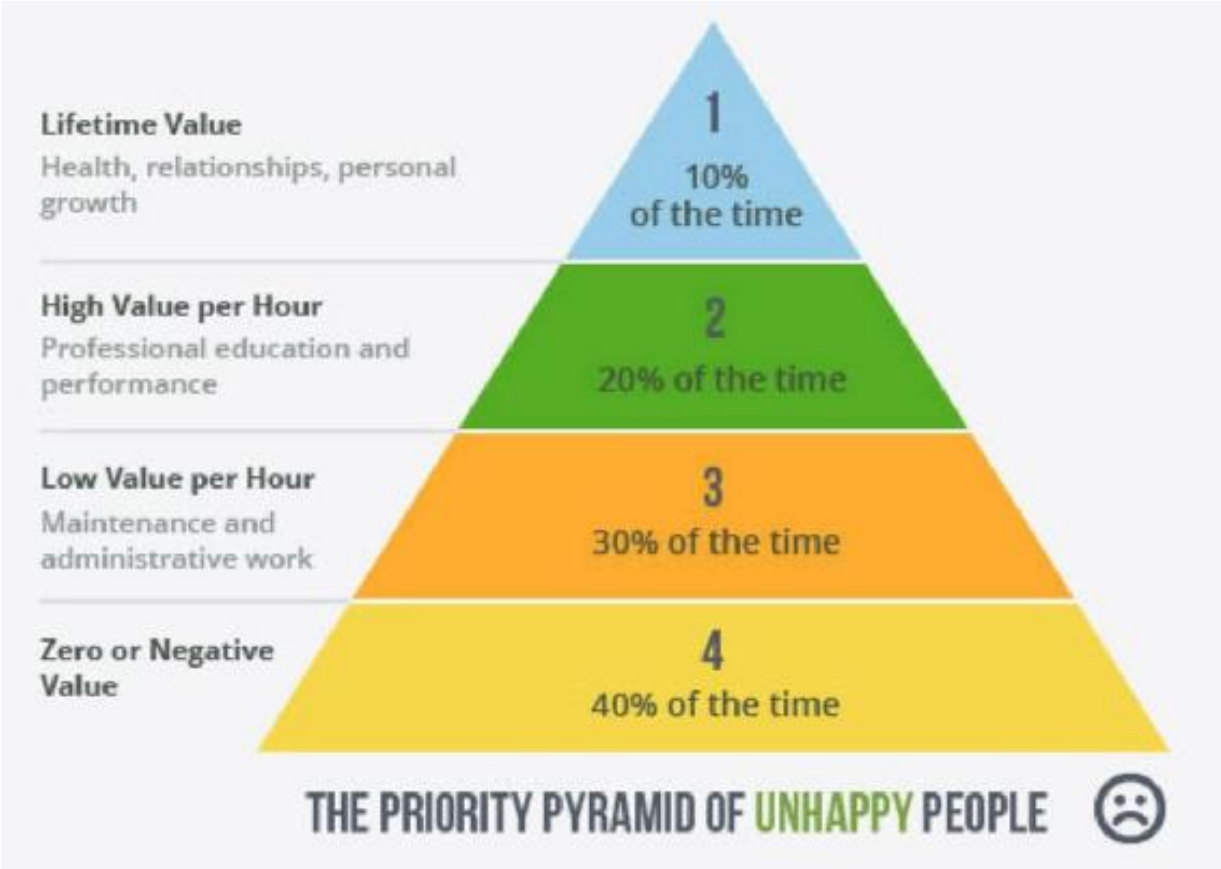
Administrative tasks, answering unimportant emails, moving papers, finishing reports, paying bills.

Level 4: Zero or negative value per time unit (mostly personal level)

These activities not only bring about no value at all but they can also diminish your energy level through their counterproductive characteristic:

- Worrying, gossiping, aimlessly surfing the internet, unhealthy eating, talk shows and broadcasts that stimulate conflict and discontent, traffic jams etc.

For most people, level 4 activities are quite often and level 1 activities quite rare. For a few people, level 1 activities prevail followed by level 2, 3 and 4 activities which receive a lot less time.



No matter the situation you're in, it's important that you realize you can shift these ratios… as long as it's important enough for you to do so.

Shifting from a life where inferior levels prevail (3 and 4) to a life where superior levels dominate (1 and 2) requires discipline, ambition and significance.

This shift is not easy but once you change your perspective there's no turning back because you come to realize how vigorous life can be!

A life where level 1 and 2 activities prevail ensures a high level of significance and offers you the comfort of knowing you're living your life purposefully. Moreover, this is exactly how the pyramid for top performers looks like.

Practically, the place you feel most fulfilled is at the crossroad of the first two levels (1 and 2) with your area of expertise – both professional and personal. I'm referring to that particular area where you can generate high quality results by putting in a small amount of effort because you've already achieved a certain level of excellence that allows you to do so naturally.

For instance, **in my case**, this crossroad occurs when I'm at my best physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually and then I hold coaching sessions.

For **a painter,** it could be achieving the best creative state and then painting a masterpiece.

For **a leader,** it could be the moment his vision becomes clear and he enters his best state before conveying his vision and inspiring the people who put faith in every word he says.

For a **salesman,** it could be the time he allots to practice the best attitude comprised of passion and contribution so that he can ultimately offer the best solution for every customer he encounters.

… and so on and so forth…

So you do indeed control how you plan your day and how much attention you give to those aspects that generate the highest added value per hour or even for your entire life.

Consequently, take full responsibility for becoming the designer of your own life and choosing if you want to spend most of your time doing 1st level or 4th level activities!

TODAY's To-Do List! (Now's the best time to do it!)

1. Look at your task list for today: next to each activity place the number that corresponds to the level of that activity (1 through 4).

2. Determine the load for the tasks you practice during your active hours (since you wake up and until you go to bed).

For instance: active hours: 18h / total time spent 3rd level: 3h / 16,6%

> For level 1: hours and minutes spent _____ meaning a percentage of _____

> For level 2: hours and minutes spent _____ meaning a percentage of _____

> For level 3: hours and minutes spent _____ meaning a percentage of _____

> For level 4: hours and minutes spent _____ meaning a percentage of _____

3. Identify the other tasks you are yet to complete and determine their load for each level.

At the end of this week, sum up the time you've spent on each level and determine the shape of your pyramid and the weight each level has.

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 10:

The 5 new paradigms of top performers

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." (John Quincy Adams)

Good morning!

Yesterday we explored a very simple manner in which you can clarify your priorities so that you might know, during each moment in time, if you're doing the right thing long term.

Today we'll be discussing the newest paradigms that top performers have. What has worked in the past has become the very obstacle towards reaching the next step.

I want to ask you now if you've noticed lately some subtle changes in the top performers you know...

You might have noticed them but not realized what they are exactly or why they're being "embraced" by these people.

(Moving forward with this lesson, you're allowed to have A-HA! moments)

Top performers have stopped applying the old paradigms and have started embracing new ones.

To be more specific:

1.

They've stopped being so preoccupied with time management...

They've started being more interested in energy management...

Why?

We all have the same 24 hours in a day which we try to split up and allocate... but not all of us have the same level of energy.

You can plan to finish a task in 60 minutes but, if you don't have the right energy, you won't even finish it in 2 hours.

This is why energy management has become the first step towards productivity!

2.

They've stopped looking at life like a marathon...

They've started looking at it as a series of sprints...

Why?

The optimal way of using up your energy is through short but intense time slots followed by an equally intense recovery time slot.

In other words, optimal performance comes on the shape of an oscillatory wave.

- Up for an intense (but not long) period,
- Then down for the necessary recovery period.

These intensity fluctuations maximize long term productivity.

3.

They've stopped considering breaks a waste of time…

They've started viewing breaks as productive time…

Why?

Because breaks are like the pit stops in Formula 1. You fill up your tank, change your tires, clean your helmet visor so that you can race at maximum speeds safely.

During your work breaks, you can take care of your body (water, stretching, nourishment, relaxation), emotions (relaxing conversations with coworkers, talking to a family member on the phone, analyzing your internal state) or soul (expressing gratitude, nourishing your values, realizing the contribution my work brings to others etc.).

All of these activities fill you up with energy for the next super-productive time slot!

4.

They’ve diminished the importance of rewards…

They’ve increased the importance of significance…

Why?

People do indeed have material needs… but more than that, they need to know that their work is significant and in accordance with their values and beliefs.

(For instance, someone who values the environment and the well-being of animals might feel extremely demotivated if they’re made to work in a company that tests their products on animals.)

5.

They’ve diminished the importance of positive thinking…

They’ve increased the importance of total immersion…

Why?

Because when you’re 100% involved in a project, it’s not just your mind that’s involved that helps you keep your hopes up. You’re physically, mentally, soulfully and emotionally invested in that project. You find yourself in everything you create and the result ends up representing you almost completely.

I’ve given you these perspectives so that you may start to have a more nuanced understanding of what a success strategy looks like for those who have become top performers in today’s world.

These new principles are indeed different from those used 10-20 years before and I'm sure you want to be on the front lines of productivity, organization and discipline.

TODAY's To-Do List! (Now's the best time to do it!)

1. Carefully reread the 5 perspectives. Identify the ones where you need to shift from the old paradigm to the new one.
2. Find your own reasons for wanting to adopt these new paradigms and identify 1-2 concrete ways through which you can apply them starting today.
3. Closely observe the productive people you know and identify the things they do differently than most people. What are those things?

See you tomorrow! Good luck!

Day 11:

How not to sabotage your Organization and Discipline

“Self-sabotage is when we say we want something and then go about making sure it doesn’t happen.” (Alyce Cornyn-Selby)

Good morning!

Yesterday we talked about the new paradigms that top performers live by. Have you appropriated them yourself? Are you willing to start applying them starting today?

Today we’ll be dealing with sabotage… especially the one we create for ourselves.

If you took a little time to analyze yourself, you might have noticed that the challenges generated by your external reality are far smaller than those created by your internal one.

There’s even a famous saying in this regard: **“Get out of your own way!”**

And there’s a lot of truth to this statement.

And the lesson regarding it is: get out of your own way, understand how you’re self-sabotaging yourself and do those primary tasks that help you become organized, disciplined and productive.

Let me show you how!

To make things as clear as possible, I'll start from **the premise that each of us is a system comprised of 4 elements: body, mind, emotions and soul.**

And this system, as a whole, functions at its best when all of its 4 parts receive attention and energy.

When this doesn't happen, friction appears between these elements each one claiming its rightful place.

For instance, if I work for hours on end at my desk without taking a break, my body will send me a signal through a stitch, a numb leg etc. It's another way of saying: "Hello, I'm in need of your attention!"...

Essentially this is the reason behind self-sabotage and procrastination!

The cost of an action requires attention and energy which should be devoted to another element. In the above mentioned example, your mind consumes the energy necessary for your body. And the latter element is not very keen on being left behind. So it fights back or, in other words, it creates certain internal blockages.

The necessary solution is handy but it's not a corrective one but rather an anticipatory one!

Prevention is the best solution to maintain harmony between your 4 intelligences: your body, mind, emotions and soul.

Each one of these intelligences has a distinct characteristic and each can be measured to find out if every element is receiving enough energy and attention.

Your body needs energy.

Your mind needs clarity.

Your emotions need confidence and harmony.

Your soul needs significance.

Why?... Allow me to go into detail...

1st situation

You have clarity, you are confident and you clearly know "why" you want to do something... but **you don't have an ounce of energy to get out of bed.** So, you're at a standstill.

2nd situation

You have the energy and the confidence, you know "why"... **but you lack clarity and direction.** You're like a fly that's flying like crazy through a room, hitting its head on every wall, trying to get out. You're moving but you're not getting anywhere.

3rd situation

You have the energy, the direction and you know "why"... **but you don't believe you can do it, you don't have faith you can achieve the desired results.** Fear of failure paralyzes you. So, you're at a standstill.

4th situation

You have the energy, the direction, the confidence... **but you lack a strong "why".** You start a project, you work at it for a short while and then you give up because something more interesting has caught your attention. You start off well but you give up because your interest in that activity fades.

These 4 situations illustrate what happens when you achieve sub-standard results. One or more of your 4 vital elements is unavailable. Therefore, instead of having an extra-resource, you end up having an extra internal conflict.

The following quote illustrates this idea perfectly:

"If you're not part of the solution then you're definitely part of the problem."

What can you do then?

The solution is getting these parts to work together for a unique benefit derived from the result.

Thus, they won't perceive the situation as the victory of one part to another's detriment.

Since I understood this holistic perspective, I could no longer set a goal that didn't take into account all of these parts of myself.

Let me give you an example of how a holistic goal regarding weight loss looks like to me (or to the clients I work with).

Usually people "go on a diet"... then they go to a wedding... and "goodbye diet!"... or they exercise... and then they have to take a business trip... and "bye-bye exercise!"... and so on and so forth...

Their pattern is "putting all of their eggs into one basket" or "betting everything on a single card"... and 99% of times they lose this bet with themselves.

Now, I'm going to describe **how the holistic goal of losing weight looks like by taking into account all of the 4 parts of ourselves:**

For your body:

- Balanced diet
- Exercise (fitness, aerobic, spinning etc.)
- Daily 30 minute walks
- Dancing
- Rest
- Relaxation

- Massage

For your mind:

- Affirmations regarding your optimal weight
- Visualizing your desired silhouette
- Easy-to-spot pictures with supple people
- Modeling the strategy of those who have managed to lose weight

For your emotions:

- Journaling when your emotional eating pattern is triggered
- Speaking to inspirational people who convey their confidence in being successful
- Emotional Freedom Technique to diminish your cravings
- Understanding the deep emotional wounds that you try to compensate with food

For your soul:

- Ho'oponopono with yourself
- Connecting to your authentic self
- Why do I really want to lose weight?... connecting to your personal values...

… and so on and so forth…

I think you've already got the picture about what I'm actually trying to say.

There's a huge difference between relying on a single table leg or 18 table legs (the number of items mentioned above)…

If that single leg is destroyed, the entire table falls apart but if your building stands on 18 pillars, your chances of succeeding are extremely high even if you lose half of those pillars.

So don't neglect either of the 4 intelligences because they will riot and sabotage your success!

And the best thing you can do for yourself is to nourish these 4 intelligences every day from the moment you wake up!

This is why waking up at 5AM makes so much sense! You preventatively nourish the key elements of the system that will support you through any activity you wish to do.

You'll notice, with astonishment, that your internal resistance has diminished – almost disappeared – because there are no more internal struggles between "brothers" who are vying for your attention and energy!

Therefore… start practicing those productive habits… and allot the first 2 hours of the day to yourself for the purpose of nourishing your 4 "best friends": your body, mind, emotions and soul.

TODAY’s To-Do List! (Now’s the best time to do it!)

1. Remember 3 moments in your past when you fell prey to self-sabotage. Which of the 4 intelligences were not included in the goal you were looking to accomplish?

2. Identify a present situation where you feel you’re self-sabotaging. Analyze your goal and find a benefit for each intelligence and an activity that will support the achievement of your goal (If you need my help, I’m here for you!).

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 12:

The open loops audit

“If I want to be great I have to win the victory over myself… self-discipline.” (Harry S. Truman)

Good morning!

Yesterday we talked about how to stop self-sabotage and how to take into account the system’s need for harmony.

Today we’ll be continuing down the same path of things to avoid or eliminate before becoming truly Organized and Productive.

Yesterday we spoke of energy, clarity, self-confidence and significance.

Well, **there’s a sure-fire way to make sure you have none of the resources mentioned above. And this way involves spreading yourself too thin… in other words… to start a hundred things and not finish a single one of them.**

This is a guaranteed recipe for failure!

You want to know what’s interesting though?… On a short term basis, you might be under the illusion that if you multi-task (in other words, work on a lot of things at the same time) you’re being productive!

False!

You can truly believe that because you're constantly moving you're on the right path… but that's not the case.

Even Mozart once said: *"The shortest way to do many things is to do only one thing at a time."*

Remember: you need to be both Effective and Efficient to experience top-notch productivity!

So, today we'll be talking about how we deal with the things we start but never finish, that follow us around and consume an enormous amount of energy without offering us anything in return but anxiety, frustration and a feeling of being overwhelmed.

We'll be talking about the **Open (and unclosed… obviously) Loops Audit**.

"I'll deal with this later"…, "It's not the best time right now"…, "I don't have the energy" or other similar affirmations actually signal that the number of loops has reached a critical level.

I can't remember the author… but the person who said the following was quite right:

"A person's level of harmony is inversely proportional to the number of open loops that are left hanging…"

However, even though I knew the quote was true, transforming this idea into action happened over several months of agony… even for me… during which I continued to "carry on my back" all of these loops… until… the following thing happened:

I decided to make a list of all my open loops!

… and because my financial "background" (financial auditor, to be more specific) tempted me, I named my list:

"The open loops audit"

Afterwards, through self-practice and coaching sessions with my clients, I refined a model that "does its intended job" and helps you, specifically, to:

Identify + Estimate + Decide + Act with regards to anything you have ever started but have never finished.

In fact, this model can actually reduce the amount of time you need to close these loops that are weighing you down by 50, 70 or even 80%.

So… to be more specific… the following is the manner in which you apply this model:

1. You make a list of all of the things you have started but have never finished

(the email you should have sent to that customer whose payment you never received, negotiating the terms of the contract with

your supplier, paying your life insurance, keeping track of your income and expenses, etc.)

2. You make a list of all of the things that bother you

- even if you're not the one to blame for these things (a creaking door, a cracked filling, a timeworn toothbrush, the used heels of your shoes that need fixing, an unraveled button from you trench coat, etc.)

3. Estimate the % of completion for each of these unfinished loops

- (0% - 99%)

4. Estimate the time you'll need to close the loop at 100%

5. Take one of the following decisions:

a) Take responsibility for finishing the task

- open your planner and write down a day that would be most suitable for you to close the loop and how much time it will take – then CLOSE IT!

b) Delegate the responsibility of finishing the task to somebody else – either for free or pay for it

(this proxy could be an employee, a member of the family, a friend or a service supplier...)

c) Decide never to finish the task and take responsibility for all of the consequences of your decision

(Notice the key words I used: “take responsibility for ALL of the consequences”)

d) Decide to temporarily close the loop until you obtain more resources or information…

BUT establish, right then and there, when you’re going to evaluate this loop again and take one of the aforementioned decisions a, b, c or d.

Example no. 1:

Context: You’re hesitating to ask your service supplier for better contractual conditions

Percentage of completion – 70%

The percentage is so high because you started negotiating 2 weeks ago and you agreed on the general outline of the contract, but there are still certain aspects that don’t match your intentions.

Time needed for completion:

- call your lawyer and schedule a meeting – 5 minutes;
- consult your lawyer and modify the contract – 1 hour;
- call your supplier and schedule a meeting – 5 minutes;

- meet with your supplier and renegotiate the contract – 1 hour.

Total time required: 2 hours and 10 minutes

Example no. 2:

Context: You can't find the necessary time to fix the leaking water faucet in the bathroom.

Percent of completion – 25%

Until now, you've asked around about some good plumbers and you already have the phone numbers of two people.

Time needed for completion:

- call the first plumber and request a price estimate for the repairs – 5 minutes;
- call the second plumber and also request a bid – 5 minutes;
- call the chosen plumber and schedule a date and time for the repairs – 2 minutes;
- the actual repairs: 30 minutes.

Total time required: 42 minutes

It's true that sometimes complications may arise along the way; however, the odds of this happening decrease dramatically when you have a plan to stick to.

From my own experience, I can tell you that without this type of mini plan, where the key word is “clarity”, these kinds of activities can take 2, 5 or even 10 times longer… and they tend to consume a lot of your energy… or, better said… they tend to destroy a lot of your energy.

And don’t think like this…

“Oh well… big deal… the water faucet in the bathroom is not leaking anymore”… yes but the effects of closing the loops will accumulate because when you carry 10, 20, or 50 open loops around with you … your life resembles that of a professional fireman: you put out fires all day long…

I don’t know about you… but to me this doesn’t sound like a real life…

To have a real shot at gaining your energy back, you need to stop and take time for yourself!

… And once you’ve done that… things will run more smoothly!

TODAY’s To-Do List! (Now’s the best time for it!)

1. Identify your open loops. This process might last a couple of days but start your list right now.

2. Estimate their percentage of completion and the time required to finish them.

3. Make one of the 4 decisions regarding each loop.

4. Act!

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 13:

Weekly evaluation no. 2

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.” (Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Hello!

The second week has come to an end!

As usual, you’ll find this week’s summary and the evaluation questionnaire that will measure your recorded progress below.

Ok, let’s see what you’ve learned this week.

Day 8: The three enemies of organization and discipline

Essential idea:

We unearthed the combined power that effectiveness and efficiency have. Then we shone a light on the 3 greatest enemies against productivity: “Frequent interruptions”; “Start & Stop” and “Unrelated activities”.

Day 9: Criteria for establishing daily priorities

Essential idea:

The simplest way to set priorities objectively is by using the Priorities Pyramid. This principle of establishing a hierarchy used

the 4 level model regarding the importance of invested time in certain activities.

Day 10: The 5 new paradigms of top performers

Essential idea:

Top performers have changed the rules of the game to adapt to the conditions present in today's world. You've learned the most important 5 perspective shifts they've made to stay on top.

Day 11: How not to sabotage your Organization and Discipline

Essential idea:

Self-sabotage is what happens when your 4 intelligences don't receive their fair "share". Your body needs energy, your mind needs clarity, your emotions need confidence and harmony, and your soul needs significance. When you feed all 4 intelligences, you lead a balanced and harmonious life.

Day 12: The open loops audit

Essential idea:

"A person's level of harmony is inversely proportional to the number of open loops that are left hanging." I've shown you the simple way in which you can start closing the loops you still have open.

Ok, now **let's see how well you fared after your second week:**

1. On how many days (out of 5) did you practice the exercise for each lesson? (0-5) >

2. How many minutes, on average, did it take you to complete the daily exercise? >

3. What topic from this second week have you found most relevant or revealing? Why? >

4. How happy are you with the progress you've made? (1 – not happy at all; 10 – very happy) What was required to happen so that your score would have been 1-2 points higher? >

5. How dedicated are you to continue to improve your level of organization and discipline? (1 – not at all; 10 – very dedicated) >

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 14 - Sunday Story:

The hot dog vendor

There was this elderly man who had a profitable little business selling hot dogs on a busy street corner in a major city. He wasn't particularly well educated, but he sold great hot dogs and his customers loved him.

During the early morning rush hour, he'd wheel his mobile hot dog stand to position it near the exit of the central railway station in town. A year ago he'd added a bacon and egg roll to his range and sold scores of them to this breakfast crowd every day. At lunchtime, he'd move his stand to a popular park where he had lines of regulars.

In the afternoon, he'd be back at the station entrance and then later, mostly at night, he knew a great spot near a nightclub where patrons rushed him off his feet. He had even installed special lighting and a flashing neon sign. Even people driving by would stop.

He'd worked hard for years and done well enough to put his only son through university and he later became a management consultant with a large firm.

One day his son warned him that a recession was on the way. The old man asked his son what this meant. Being an educated man, his son gave a very detailed explanation of how the

recession would severely impact every person in the community, particularly small business owners like his father. There would be enormous unemployment; people would not be able to afford to spend money as they did now.

He painted a gloomy picture of the future and warned his father that it would be wise to cut back on his expenses and “tighten his belt” financially and prepare for the worst. The old man didn’t know much about the economy or interest rates, but he trusted his son. After all, he was an educated man. Recession mentality kicked in.

The old man began to cut back on the quantity of sausages and bread rolls he bought. He didn’t want to get caught with stale rolls as business began to drop off. But it was hard to judge and some days he actually ran out of sausages and rolls earlier than he normally would. So he went home early and spent more time worrying about this recession that was coming.

Soon he knew that what his son had said was right. He noticed that his takings were indeed falling. This depressed him more and so he tended to get out of bed later each day. After all, why get to the station so early when obviously more people would be eating at home rather than spending money on breakfast in the city. He decided that his bacon and egg rolls were too expensive for most people now. After all, they were twice the price of a hot dog, so he cut them from his menu and his sales continued to plummet.

Wow, his son was right, this recession was hitting hard!

He decided to save more money and not replace the batteries that powered his neon sign and lights at night. Now because he was in the dark, fewer people bought from him and soon he decided that it wasn't even worth his time setting up at night. Eventually, he decided to sell off his equipment and his trolley.

He was in luck though because the woman who bought his trolley didn't seem to know how bad business was, or how severe the recession was going to be. He managed to unload the trolley for more than he thought he would get. Now day after day he stayed at home, depressed, and occasionally his son would visit him and they would discuss how bad the recession was, and how lucky the old man had been to have an educated son who had warned him in advance about this terrible recession.

The moral: Our thoughts create our reality!

Have a great Sunday!

Day 15:

Order as a way of working

“Order is the shape upon which beauty depends.” (Pearl Buck)

Hello!

Last week we talked about the open loops audit and how you can increase your energy level by resolving these unfinished activities.

Today we’ll be talking about something elementary but very important! We’ll be discussing order as an integrated part of organization and discipline.

We all remember what adults used to tell us when we were kids: “Be more organized!”, “Clean your desk!” or “Pick up your clothes and stop leaving them hanging around!”.

What’s interesting is that we naturally have a higher or lower tolerance towards disorder or “chaos”.

Some people are bothered even by the crooked position of a book in their library whilst others couldn’t be bothered even if their whole library was on the floor in disarray.

So it’s important to take this aspect into account and not pursue a dramatic overnight change from disorder to impeccable order.

But if order is already a part of your life then congratulations, you're in the right spot!

Still, why is order so important?

For two reasons:

1. Our external environment influences our internal one: this means that an external disarray generates an internal one… and no, I don't think this particular state is called "creativity"… it's called disorder!

2. Our internal environment influences our external one: sloppy thinking generates and maintains external disarray… and we end up where we started, meaning the 1st reason… and so on and so forth, we find ourselves in a very harmful vicious circle.

Consequently, **without order, there can be no organization, discipline or productivity!**

I'm NOT suggesting to start moving mountains… what I propose instead is that you allot two 5 minute time slots each day for the specific purpose of maintaining order on your desk and inside your computer.

Two 5 minute periods each day!

Practice them and over the next couple of days you'll notice:

- An increase in mental clarity
- An improved psychic state

- An ease in solving problems and
- A diminished feeling of fatigue.

Are these improvements worth 10 minutes each day? Absolutely!

IMPORTANT!

- Set up these 2 order periods in the morning and do them when it's time!

How to apply these order periods:

1. After use, archive every document to its designated spot (folder, document tray etc.).
2. Twice a day, clean your desk of papers, pens and any other unnecessary elements that cause disorder.
3. On your desk, 90% of the time, there should only be your computer, phone, planner and a pen. 10% of the time is dedicated to those moments when you work with documents, books, manuals or other printed works.

Watch out for your counter-productive internal dialogue:

- "I don't have time to clean my desk now, I'll do it later"
- "It'll take me an hour to organize my desk, I'd better do it tomorrow"

TODAY’s To-Do List! (Now’s the best time to do it!)

1. Schedule the two order periods for your desk.
2. Place a post-it somewhere on your desk where it’s easy to see with the text: “Archive documents after use, keep desk clean and organized. Before leaving the office make sure your desk in an impeccable state for the next day.”
3. Adopt the following belief: “I’m ordered and this helps me be organized and disciplined!”

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 16:

When Organization and Discipline meet… Pomodoro is born

“I never could have done what I have done, without the habits of punctuality, order, and diligence, without the determination to concentrate myself on one object at a time.” (Charles Dickens)

Good morning!

Yesterday we talked about order as a way of working and thinking.

Today we’re going to make another step in this direction and we’ll be talking about **one of the most powerful methods I know when it comes to boosting productivity.**

It may seem simple, too simple to work even, but I assure you it’s “almost” perfect in many ways.

I invite you to give this practice a serious chance, then reap the rewards and share the “secret” with those you care about.

This habit made a huge difference in how I work and generate results. The difference was so significant that I can’t compare this technique with any other method of increasing your productivity.

It’s the first and most important rule I apply, on a daily basis, by priority list.

I'll briefly tell you what you have to do and I invite you to read the article attached to this email.

How to practice Pomodoro

1. Set a kitchen timer or your phone alarm to ring in 25 minutes.
2. During this interval, work nonstop focusing completely on what you're doing.
3. After these 25 minutes, take a 5 minute break to refresh.
4. After 4 Pomodoro sessions, take a longer 15-20 minute break.
5. Repeat this process as many times as you can throughout the day.

Be mindful of:

- the level of significance each activity from your list has
- how you estimate your time during the planning phase
- external interruptions
- internal interruptions

TODAY’s To-Do List! (Now’s the perfect time to do it!)

1. Read the attached article regarding the Pomodoro technique, probably the best productivity boosting method I know.

2. Set out to practice at least 2 Pomodoro sessions today (and in the following days). This means you’ll be implementing in the next few days two 25 minute sessions where you’re working nonstop and you’re focusing on just one task at a time.

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Attached article:

24 reasons why the Pomodoro technique doubles your productivity

1. **You can't get started until you have a "to-do" list** having the tasks you plan to do. So you eliminate "chaos" right from the start.

2. For this technique to work, **you need to establish your priorities and start working on your number one priority.**

3. **You know when to start and when to stop.** You estimate each task using Pomodoro units (3 x Pomodoro, ½ Pomodoro etc.).

4. **You break your bigger activities into smaller, more actionable tasks.** In other words, you answer the question "what's the next step?". Therefore, you eliminate procrastination because you have the necessary clarity and you know how much energy you have to invest into your next step.

5. **You work on a single task at a time.** Multi-tasking is thereby "cured".

6. **You group similar activities and act on them in the same time interval.** Your mind will be grateful to you because you won't be forcing it to shift so many variables it has to work with thus saving lots of mental energy.

7. **You more accurately estimate how long each task is going to be.** At first you might not be so perfect but the practice of estimating the time necessary to finish an activity will shortly become one of your abilities.

8. **You refine your planning process** and you determine much more precisely all the steps you need to check to reach your destination. Your thinking becomes much more practical since you're focusing on the next actionable step.

9. **It's easy to practice and it doesn't require hard to find elements.** Just a piece of paper with your to-do list, a pencil or crayon to cross each finished element off your list and a time: an alarm clock, phone alarm or kitchen timer (Pomodoro). If you're working on the computer you can use Focus Booster (www.moosti.com).

10. **You don't mentally exhaust yourself** because you plan your recovery breaks before you get started.

11. **You take short breaks often** after each 25 minute Pomodoro session and after 4 sessions you take a longer 20 minute break.

12. **During the break you take care of your body:** you hydrate yourself, get up from the desk and do a bit of stretching, have a light snack.

13. **During the break you take care of your emotions:** you call a loved one, talk to a coworker, check your internal emotional

state.

14. **You relax your mind regarding anything external and focus only on what you have to do.** You close your email, set your phone on silent, ask your coworkers not to interrupt you if they see you focused on what you're doing.

15. **You increase your capacity to focus on just one thing at a time.** Top performers finish one task at a time with excellent results and not 10 things simultaneously with mediocre results.

16. **You resolve your internal interruptions** (those that come from inside of you). I mean the moment you get an idea regarding a project or another activity. Your write on a handy piece of paper 2-5 words to remember your idea but you keep doing what your doing until you finish the Pomodoro session you've started.

17. **Getting closer to a deadline (even one you set) stimulates your internal resources to focus.** Therefore, you synergistically work with every resource you've got.

18. **You increase your motivation and maintain it at a constant level until the end of the day.** When you see how productive you become you won't want to stop… I'm serious :)

19. You become aware of a false issue these days: the fact that **there are a lot less urgent matters that need to be tended to and that cannot wait 1-2 Pomodoro sessions…** meaning 30-60 minutes.

20. **You increase the quality of your results because you give everything you've got during that Pomodoro session.** In that moment, there's nothing else for you to do other than what you're doing until the 25 minutes are up.

21. **You improve your discipline of not letting yourself become distracted by disturbing factors.** This will help you make clear distinctions between the various activities you're doing. You stop mixing work with relaxation. You work intensely and focused for 25 minutes and then you relax for 5 minutes. And after 2 hours you take a 20 minute break.

22. **Pomodoro helps you develop more effective study and work processes.** You begin assimilating a higher quantity of information when you're studying because you maintain the optimal state for this activity longer. Your mind detaches itself from the process at one point if it doesn't clearly know "how long" it will be to reach the destination. Predetermined periods are beneficial because they keep your mind fired up.

23. **At the end of the day you know exactly what you did.** You know how many complete Pomodoro sessions you've had and you know what you've worked on during each session and the result you had.

24. **Pomodoro helps you become very productive without having to sacrifice your body or emotionally burden yourself.** Alternating between periods of intense work and periods of relaxation for your body and emotions makes a significant difference because you help your entire system maintain its

balance. Consequently, you maintain a high level of energy and you end up working 8 to 10 hours super-intensely and generating qualitative results that will be hard to believe for those who work with you.

Day 17:

The strategy of a genius: the ability to focus

"It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer." (Albert Einstein)

Good morning!

Yesterday we talked about the miraculous Pomodoro technique, the one that can do wonders… if it's applied!

Today I would like to talk to you about **5 principles that will allow you the opportunity to increase the quality of your results as a consequence of increasing your power of concentration.**

Apply these principles and I guarantee you'll experience highly productive and satisfying days from now on!

1. Clarify what's important (See the Priority Pyramid).

You have no chance at being truly productive if you're working on low ranked tasks. Eliminate your fear of failure and dive into those tasks that have the potential of generating the most relevant results.

Performers take on the responsibility of learning from every feedback they receive as a result of their activities… even if they

too have their failures. However, they never negotiate their number one priority.

2. Clearly establish your top 5 priorities for the day.

Let me tell you a secret. Start with the 1st one, then move on to the 2nd one… and so on and so forth. The more priorities out of your top 5 you'll be able to finish the better you'll feel at the end of the day.

Through contrast, if you start doing the 5th, then the 4th etc. … but you never get to do the 1st… the things you've managed to achieve will end up amounting to diddly-squat.

Your number one task will place you among the performers if you finish it or it will hold you down in a mediocre state if you don't finish it. So, choose wisely!

3. Abolish multitasking!

This is our modern disease! And unfortunately, it's not showing any signs of going away, rather it's spreading! How do you see yourself if you continue to work in the same rhythm? How many balls can you juggle at the same time?

Any performer will tell you that they work on just one thing at a time and they dedicate themselves to it mind, body and soul. They stay focused until they finish their number one priority, then they move on to the second. It's the only long term viable solution!

4. Close your email!

I hope you didn't feel any pangs throughout your body. Just kidding, but just like any addiction, when you interrupt the stimulus you'll "physically" miss it. This is a sign that something's wrong.

If you don't check your emails every 5 minutes, congratulations! If, however, you have a compulsion to stay up-to-date with everything (even if it's something completely irrelevant for what's important to you) objectively look at this behavior and notice what you'll gain and lose long term.

5. Take breaks and reward yourself!

I'm talking about Pomodoro right now. Like I said yesterday, it's a genius technique in more ways than one. It allows you the opportunity to take short and often breaks.

Each break invigorates you and gives you the chance to recharge for the next sprint. It's unbelievable but you can actually work between 8 and 10 hours a day, productively, without exhausting yourself. Don't take my word for it however, try it out yourself!

These principles are essential if you want to be organized and disciplined and I would also like to add 3 interesting and very useful perspectives.

> Be glad when you have nothing to do!

When was the last time you had nothing to do? I'm asking to motivate you to increase your productivity so that you can experience more of these moments. The way most people operate is like a recipe for failure.

They put so many things on their plate that they can't finish them all in one day and they get frustrated. I call this process **"carried over frustration"**... it gets carried over day after day...

> We're addicted to wasting time

Emailing, using Facebook, texting, surfing the internet... these are all beginning to turn into serious addictions. We think it's ok because everybody's doing it. But if tomorrow everyone started smoking crack, would you do it too? Be smarter than that and take the necessary measures that will allow you to focus better and realistically increase the quality of your life.

> When you're focused you're unstoppable!

You won't believe it until you do it! You can reach the performance of finishing in a day what used to take you a week.

However, you need to ask yourself a very uncomfortable question: "Am I wasting time instead of doing what's important?" If the answer is "yes" then step out of your trance and start acting... it's for your own good!

TODAY's To-Do List! (Now's the best time to do it!)

1. Reread the 5 principles and identify the ones you're still not applying. For each of them, find one thing you can do to start implementing that principle (for instance, organize your schedule using Pomodoro sessions and, during your break, get up from your desk and drink a glass of water).

2. Mentally separate your productive peers from the unproductive ones. Promise yourself to spend as little time as possible with time wasters and to interact (and let yourself be inspired) as often as possible with highly productive people who have high professional standards.

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 18:

Your mind kills organization. Here's how not to depend on memories...

"*Discipline is the bridge between goals and accomplishment." (Jim Rohn)*

Good morning!

Yesterday we talked about the fundamental principles of concentration. It's such a rare ability that those who practice it are either geniuses either top performers...

Today we'll be discussing the drawbacks your memory has when it comes to organization.

I will present you with a very simple system through which you can make sure you won't forget anything and, furthermore, you'll have everything neatly organized and set-up.

Sounds too good to be true, right?... Don't answer this question yet... just wait and see...

One of my very good friends once shared with me a quote that I'll remember all of my life. He said the following:

"Our mind's main purpose is to be creative not to store information. The busier it is with remembering stuff the less available resources it has to create."

Seems obvious, doesn't it?... Then why do we burden our mind with a great deal of mostly useless information and hamper our efforts to be creative to our fullest potential?

To draw a parallel with what we talked about in the lesson regarding the Priority Pyramid, I would say the current situation looks like this:

"Remember to pay *that* bill, to call George, to order an ink cartridge etc." All of these are 3rd level activities that don't bring about any added value per time unit.

I could be asking myself instead: "How do I find out what my customers want?", "How can I improve this product?", "How can I reduce the costs of transport?" etc.

Notice the necessary difference in thinking quality?

So, I encourage you to use this simple system to organize your thoughts and information and it will free up a lot of creative energy that you can then spend on 1st and 2nd level activities from the Priorities Pyramid.

Collecting ideas in writing then sorting, prioritizing and planning them

How to practice:

1. Buy a post-it cube (500 – 1,000 square post-its, preferably of different colors).

2. Buy a tray or improvise with a box you can use to store these written post-its.

3. Allow yourself two intervals throughout the day (after lunch and before leaving the office) to sort and prioritize the ideas that come up.

4. Plan the specific date and time for executing that task using your planner or calendar.

I really like the following quote: *"A brilliant idea usually visits you once. You'd better take advantage of it."*

Be mindful of:

- The thought that "you'll remember that later on" so you don't need to write it down;
- Writing a single idea on a post-it;
- Periodically revising that box or tray;
- Executing that specific task at the scheduled moment.

TODAY's To-Do List! (Now's the best time to do it!)

1. Buy or search your desk for a paper cube with tenths of sheets.

2. Buy or improvise a tray or a box where you can place your ideas written on post-its. A single idea per post-it!

3. Schedule the interval when you'll revise what's in the tray and decide how you're going to handle them. After you've scheduled the ideas in your planner, it's best if you throw out the post-its and leave the box empty.

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 19:

How many “golden” minutes do you allot daily?

“Snowflakes are one of nature’s most fragile things, but just look at what they can do when they stick together.” (Tom Wroot)

Good morning!

Yesterday we talked about how you shouldn’t rely on memories and how you can implement a very simple system to capture and implement your ideas.

Today we’ll be discussing **two complementary principles: focusing your work on similar activities and scheduling your strategic and creative thinking interval during the most productive time slot of your day.**

Organization and discipline have the final purpose of increasing productivity and this means better results, which will be achieved faster whilst consuming less resources.

We’ve already approached the enemies of productivity so now we’ll be talking about two “friendly” resources when it comes to the time and energy you invest.

The first resource has to do with grouping and finishing similar tasks during the same time interval.

How to do it:

1. Collect all of your incoming ideas using the tray or box described yesterday.

2. Group similar activities in the same time slot (phone calls, emails, meetings, sending offers, searching the web for information etc).

3. Execute these blocks of similar activities during productive Pomodoro sessions.

Be mindful of:

- **The situations where the information needs to be sent quickly** (for instance, after finishing up a call with a customer he asked that you send him a certain piece of information to make the purchase). But don't use this situation as an excuse to lose your focus...

- **Monotony and saturation.** If your productivity begins to drop you can shift between tasks and time segments to add a bit of variety.

It's true you'll lose a little time while entering the new segment but you would have already suffered from a decreased productivity level if you had continued with the initial task.

(For instance, if you have scheduled 3 Pomodoro sessions to send out invoices you can insert a 25 minute session, after the second Pomodoro, during which you send offers to clients.)

I think this practice is simple enough that further explanations are not necessary.

However, this principle becomes even stronger if you combine it with the following:

Allot the first 30 minutes up to 2 hours of your work day as individual thinking time.

I trust **Brian Tracy who said:**

“Every minute you spend in planning saves 10 minutes in execution.”

In contrast, there’s a saying I passionately hate that states **“we’re workers NOT thinkers…”**

So allot the first part of your work schedule for strategic and operational thinking.

This time that you are investing has the potential to generate so much clarity regarding what you have to do that you might be surprised when your day becomes as easy as a stroll in the park.

During a previous email, we talked about how not to sabotage your success and one of the main causes of self-sabotage mentioned was the lack of clarity.

Eliminate this obstacle right from the start and you’ll enjoy a super productive day.

How to practice it:

1. Keep your planner free during the first 30 minutes up to 2 hours out of your work day.
2. Use this time for strategic and creative thinking.
3. Aim to finish 4 highly productive Pomodoro sessions during these 2 hours and include the most important activities of the day.

Be mindful of:

- **the need to socialize with your coworkers first thing in the morning** (remember that some people are addicted to wasting time…).
- **the necessary time you need to prepare before you start working** (Is your desk in order? Do you have the necessary information? Is your water glass or teacup nearby? Etc.)
- **the unproductive manner in which some people start their day with a meeting** for which people haven't had the time to prepare properly. The direct consequence is that the meeting lasts longer than necessary and diminishes your productivity.

TODAY's To-Do List! (Now's the best time to do it!)

1. Allot at least the first Pomodoro of the day towards strategic and creative thinking.

2. Group the similar activities you have to do today in a single block.

3. Work using Pomodoro sessions and you'll be surprised how much your productivity will increase "overnight".

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 20:

Weekly evaluation no. 3

“There is only one corner of the universe you can be certain of improving, and that’s your own self.” (Aldous Huxley)

Hello!

This third week has come to a close!

I’m curious how you evolved, what challenges you faced and what “A-ha!” moments you’ve had.

Ok, let’s see what you’ve learned this week.

Day 15: Order as a way of working

Essential idea:

Order can be a treacherous and subtle saboteur. Your mind works clumsily when it has to sort out chaos. Give it an environment that is as ordered as possible and it will work more productively.

Day 16: When Organization and Discipline meet… Pomodoro is born

Essential idea:

The Pomodoro technique is the best kept secret of increasing productivity. And this method alone can increase your productivity by 2, 3 or even 5 times. You can't afford not to use this technique.

Day 17: The strategy of a genius: the ability to focus

Essential idea:

Increase your ability to focus by taking into account these simple and easy to apply 5 principles. Enjoy the times when you have nothing to do and avoid those people who waste time.

Day 18: Your mind kills organization. Here's how now to depend on memories…

Essential idea:

Use this simple method using paper cubes to write your ideas on so that no "brilliant" idea gets away. Use your mind to create and not store information.

Day 19: How many "golden" minutes do you allot daily?

Essential idea:

Collect your ideas, group them according to their common characteristics, and finish them during highly productive Pomodoro sessions. Moreover, don't let anyone take away the first 30-120 minutes of your productive work day. Think, create and plan for more effective and efficient days.

Ok, now **let's see how well you fared after your third week:**

1. On how many days (out of 5) did you practice the exercise for each lesson? (0-5) >
2. How many minutes, on average, did it take you to complete the daily exercise? >
3. What topic from this third week have you found most relevant or revealing? Why? >
4. How happy are you with the progress you've made? (1 – not happy at all; 10 – very happy) What was required to happen so that your score would have been 1-2 points higher? >
5. How dedicated are you to continue to improve your level of organization and discipline? (1 – not at all; 10 – very dedicated) >

Good luck! Have a great weekend!

Day 21 - Sunday Story:

The medical student

On the day of college admissions a young man was getting ready to continue his journey of accumulating even more knowledge, an adventure he began a long time ago that seemed to have no end.

Lost in his own thoughts, his mind immersed in what was going to happen in the future, he barely noticed the old man he bumped into.

“I’m sorry, professor!” the young man said, feeling ashamed.

“Oh, I’m not a professor,” the old man answered “I’m a new student just like you.”

“Well, how old are you?” the young man asked in shock.

“73” he said with a playful glow in his eyes.

“And what will you be studying?” The young man went on to ask.

“Medicine. I’ve always wanted to become a doctor and now…” the old man paused like he was remembering something that had happened a long time ago. “Now I can finally pursue my dream!”

The young man was shocked by his answer.

“Excuse me sir but, to become a doctor, you need at least 7 years of college. In seven years you will turn 80.”

The old man put his arm over the boy’s shoulders, looked him in the eyes and answered with a smile:

“God willing I’ll turn 80 no matter if I follow my dream or not. Time will pass either way…”

Have a pleasant Sunday! We’ll reconnect on Monday morning!

Day 22:

Delegating with spectacular results!

“Drop the idea that you are Atlas carrying the world on your shoulders. The world would go on even without you. Don’t take yourself so seriously.” (Norman Vincent Peale)

Good morning!

Last week we talked about how you can organize your ideas and execute them as a group to increase your effectiveness. We also discussed how allotting time for yourself in the morning can lead you to excellence while not doing so can keep you in an “okayish” zone.

Today we’ll be referring to a topic that’s painful especially for those who have to lead people, teams or companies. It regards delegation.

Unfortunately, many people believe they know what delegation is… however, that’s not the case at all.

Delegation consists of a couple of principles and if you don’t apply them just right the entire process will be a failure.

What I will be presenting below is a strategy used by a friend of mine who owns 4 businesses and works with more than 15 people.

What's truly different about this strategy compared to other cases is that **people take responsibility, perform at an excellent level and are delighted by the process.**

To me "to delegate" doesn't mean: "Here's what you have to do... get on with it, do what you know, just deliver results!"

And you'll understand this after reading the ensuing information.

One more thing: **this strategy is presented from the perspective of the person who delegates, meaning from the manager to the employee.**

BUT!... **Even if tasks are already being delegated to you, you can use the information below to change how the delegation process goes!**

The feeling you'll get will be something along the lines of: "How have I been working in such a way for such a long time?"

Read, understand and then apply... and you'll see how different the results are!

There are 2 lists...

The first explains what you have to do when you delegate...

Then... the second list explains what not to do when you delegate.

What to do when you delegate:

100% responsibility for only one person – The person to whom you delegate something must know that he has 100% responsibility for the result of the delegated task. It is not the responsibility of those he works with. As a result, apologies such as “I didn’t do that because John from marketing didn’t give me the design in time” will not work.

Clarify the result and write it down – Yes, I know you know it, you find this in many management books, but I want to say it again just to be sure. Clarify with your employee what would be the concrete, visible result of the task. When you arrive at a clear understanding of that result, tell the person to write it down, and also write it down yourself.

Ask for a deadline – Yes, I said it right – ask, not give! Ask the person when the task will be complete. And then ask: why is it going to take you so much time? Then ask: can you do it faster? Then ask: how could you do it in half the time? This way, you assure yourself that the deadline is right and at the same time, the other person is responsible because you didn’t give him the deadline, he assumed responsibility for the deadline.

Write down the deadline – In front of the person, take out your planner or your delegation template and write it down. This way, you make the person more responsible because he knows that you also wrote down the deadline and now it’s real. If you are not face-to-face and you are talking on the phone, tell that person: “Wait a sec, because I want to write the deadline down.”

Ask about the consequences – Again, ask, don't tell! People are much more open to respecting what they came up with on their own, instead of what other people tell them. Afterwards, ask the next question: do you take 100% responsibility for the deadline you gave me? The obvious answer will be "yes". Then ask: now tell me what the consequence will be if you don't respect this deadline? If he doesn't know, give him some options like: 10% salary cut, working overtime, and so on (even though I don't agree with employees working overtime).

Write down the consequences – The same thing you did for deadlines. When the person sees that you are writing down the consequences, it will increase his level of personal responsibility, knowing that he has agreed to the consequence.

Schedule the next appointment – Write down the date and time of your next meeting to discuss the result of the delegated task. Even if that meeting will be only 5 minutes long, it is really important for the successful completion of the delegated task. That person will need to meet with you in person and see the planner or template where you wrote down the deadline and consequences.

I know it may seem like a long and difficult to apply process...But trust me, it's not! In the beginning, it might take you longer... but once you learn the process... it will take you just as long as it does now. Only... the long term results will be extraordinary!

No exceeded deadlines!

No hassle!

No wrong or misunderstood results!

Now… like I promised…

Here's a lost of… **What NOT to do when you're delegating (and afterwards, as well):**

Tell the person how to do his job

Many entrepreneurs and managers have a compulsion to explain to the experts how to do their jobs. And the experts hate this habit. Don't fall into the trap of believing that you know how to do their job better. If you do know better, then you hired the wrong person.

Being too available

Most new-age entrepreneurs have the tendency of over-helping their people. This is a good thing, but I think that in some cases, helping is taken to the extreme. More precisely, if the person you delegated the task to calls you or emails you 3 times a day to ask about the delegated task, then that is really unproductive. Tell your people that if they have questions, they should send them in one email per day. They don't get to call you. Why is that? Because if the problem is really important, they will call you. But most of the time, the problems aren't that important or time sensitive, and they can solve them on their own.

Making it personal

Don’t assign work to employees on a personal level. Don’t use phrases like “do this for me, I need to ask you a favor, this is important for me,” or anything like this. I don’t want to hit you over the head with this, but keep this in mind: as long as that person is paid for their time and he does what he loves, then he is not doing you any favors. I don’t want to be mean, but if you don’t take this suggestion seriously, you’ll reach a point when you have a lot of people who have done a lot of favors for you that you’ll have to repay in some way, and that’s not good for anybody.

Forgive

I’m not telling you to get mad at the person when he misses a deadline (again don’t take it personally), but what I want to say is if you agreed to some consequences, then stick to them. Because, otherwise, you risk that your employees will not take your deadlines and consequences seriously. For example, there is a time that an employee came to me and said that he couldn’t do the task on time because a person in his family had died. This kind of situation will push you to the limit and probably will make you break your own rules. What I did, in that case, was to cut the employee’s salary 50% (as we had agreed to as a consequence, previously) and then I gave him a bonus of 100% to cover the funeral arrangements.

Fail to deliver on your promises

Keep 100% of your promises that you make to your employees and maybe they will do the same. Keep 90% of your promises

and your employees will keep less than 50%.

Fail to follow these rules every time

It's like saying that you have read too many books and you don't need to read anymore. Keep in mind that this is more important for your employees than it is for yourself.

Fail to follow the delegation template for small tasks

Do you know how small tasks become big tasks? When you don't delegate them properly. If the task comes back to you done poorly or late, then that task will require double or triple the resources it needed in the first place.

Change the rules because your employees don't like it at first

Nobody likes deadlines and consequences. If you are a leader, you have to live with that. Your job is not to be liked by your employees all the time, your job is to make your clients happy and push your employees past the limits they set for themselves. This is not an easy job, because if it were, everyone would do it.

TODAY's To-Do List! (Now's the best time to do it!)

1. Carefully reread the 2 lists that include things to do as well as things to avoid.
2. Take a piece of paper and rewrite the steps from the first list then take some time to fully understand the motivations and

implications of those stops.

3. Use this list during your next delegation meeting regardless if you're at the receiving end of the delegation process or not.

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 23:

The productive refusal

“Don’t let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.” (John Wooden)

Good morning!

Yesterday we talked about an essential topic for any type of business that you’re working on: delegation. You received a list of things to do and things to avoid.

Today we’re going to continue on the same path regarding professional relationships and we’re going to talk about the productive refusal.

The phrase may sound contradictory but I chose it because it best expresses a reality that is guaranteed to increase your productivity.

One of the secrets of productivity, besides knowing what to put on your “to-do” list, is the “do NOT do” list, meaning which things you should refuse or stop doing.

A good metaphor for it is that *you can’t drink wine from a glass filled with water. You first need to empty the glass of water before you can pour the wine.*

Similarly, if your schedule is filled with tasks that need to be done and that occupy a large parte of your time, you can't introduce new activities that have a higher added value.

What I've noticed in many of my coaching sessions regarding productivity is that **too many people have tasks in their planner that were delegated to them, tasks they couldn't say "no" to even though they weren't a part of their job description.**

And not only did they not refuse the tasks in the opportune moment, they also promised to deliver the results by setting completely unrealistic deadlines.

The consequence:

They stopped doing what they set out to do (1st or 2nd level activities) to finish 3rd level tasks delegated by their superiors in a very short amount of time.

This led to working overtime, family conflicts, not enough time for relaxation and so on and so forth...

All of these could have been avoided... with a **Productive Refusal!**

Let me show you exactly what I'm talking about.

How to practice it:

1. Never answer a request before first consulting your planner to check your already scheduled activities. Otherwise, be prepared to accept the consequences…

2. Offer deadline alternatives for the request you receive. Always take into account a safety margin to finish the tasks that are already planned.

3. When offering alternatives, keep in mind the level of the request. Allot it a time period according to its level of priority (1 through 4).

4. Come to an agreement with all those who usually delegate tasks to you that, for each delegated activity, they should allow you at least 24 hours to deliver the results. Thusly, you'll interrupt the pattern of "putting out fires" constantly, a style of work that generates errors and mediocre quality results.

5. Don't take responsibility for what you can't deliver at the requested time. Never accept a task using the words "I'll try" because everybody in this situation will have something to lose:

- The person who delegates because he hopes it will be ready on time and

- You because you do whatever it takes and consume lots of resources whilst NOT finishing what you had planned as priorities!

To make the best decisions about these cases, take into account the list regarding the delegation process.

Be mindful of:

- “Urgent” requests that don’t involve you directly. Redirect those requests to the people right for the job.
- Coworkers who do not organize their time properly and end up passing on the task to others alongside the stress involved. Be firm and don’t let yourself be “fooled” by the drama created by those who like to just put out fires. If you perpetuate the “just this once” solution it will be a sure-fire recipe for long term failure.

TODAY’s To-Do List! (Now’s the best time for it!)

1. Reread the rules for an effective and efficient delegation process.

2. Identify at least 3 situations in the past when you didn’t practice “the productive refusal”. What were the consequences? What would have happened if you had applied this principle then?

3. Remember at least 3 situations when you delegated a task to someone else, that person said they’ll “try” but failed to meet their deadline. What were the consequences you were faced with? Could you have done anything differently?

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 24:

How do you get over failure?

"*Vitality shows in not only the ability to persist but the ability to start over." (F. Scott Fitzgerald)*

Good morning!

Yesterday we talked about the productive refusal and how to finish what you set out to do without letting yourself get distracted by the "pressing needs" of others.

Today we'll be discussing what you can do when, for some reason or another, you miss a day in your schedule.

What I recommend is the following **2 step sequence:**

Step 1: Forgive yourself!

- forgive yourself for not being "perfect"... because no one actually is...

Step 2: Get back on the horse as soon as possible!

- restart the chain of good days as soon as possible.

Why is it important that you do so?

Small syncopes are almost inevitable but herein lies the trap that most people who want to implement productive habits fall prey

to.

They have a “perfect” series for a few days then they fall off the wagon for one day.

Because they’re not perfect anymore, they give up, they feel disappointed and they plan to restart the process in a couple of days.

Unfortunately for most people, this means they’ll “never” get back to what they were doing.

The alternative is to accept “the imperfection” but under no circumstances should you let 2 consecutive days go by without practicing the habit.

Starting over after just 1 break day is much easier than after 2 or more days.

Moreover, you need to update your “WHY”.

In other words, you need to reconnect the answer to the question “Why is doing this important to me?” and “What values am I nourishing when I’m practicing this habit?”.

Most times, the simple act of rediscovering the relevance of an action you’ve come to practice out of a sense of inertia can offer you a consistent motivational boost.

It’s like you’ve suddenly remembered you had a project with favorable future perspectives and you start massively reinvesting

energy into it.

TODAY’s To-Do List! (Now’s the best time to do it!)

1. **“Clean” any negative emotion or regret** you might have regarding that day or those days you’ve missed. Promise yourself to be much more careful when practicing productive habits.

2. **Ask yourself “Why is it important for me to implement these productive habits?”**

“What concrete benefits will I enjoy 30 days from now, 6 months from now or 3 years from now if I keep up this positive practices?”

See you tomorrow! Good luck!

Day 25:

Daily revision

“How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.” (Annie Dillard)

Good morning!

Yesterday we talked about how you can overcome failure and “get back on the horse”. This is an essential factor for any medium and long term project you wish to finish.

Today we’ll be discussing an element that, when practiced, **will decrease the likelihood of self-sabotage or falling off the wagon by at least 80%!**

I’m talking about the Daily revision.

Why is this activity so important?

Because your mind relaxes when you allow it the opportunity to draw the line after the experiences of the current day, to evaluate what worked and what didn’t and to capitalize on what it’s learned.

Concretely, it’s enough to ask some questions for 5 minutes. Don’t be fooled by the fact that it’s just 5 minutes.

It’s probably the best 5 minute investment you’ll make all day.

Even Socrates said *“The unexamined life is not worth living!”*

These minutes will weigh heavily on your future successes because this is how you ensure growth and evolution by at least 1% each day.

Here are the questions:

1. What worked today?
2. What didn’t work today?
3. What have I learned today?
4. What will I do differently tomorrow?
5. What am I grateful for today?

TODAY’s To-Do List! (If you do this revision in the morning use the previous day as a point of reference.)

1. Go through the list and answer the questions (preferably in the evening, an hour before you go to sleep).
2. For simplicity and organization purposes, it’s best that you use a notebook to write in daily. By doing so, you’ll have all of the relevant information stored in one place.

See you tomorrow! Have a productive day!

Day 26:

Online productivity: email, internet and productivity tools

“Thinking is easy, acting is difficult, and to put one’s thoughts into action is the most difficult thing in the world.” (Goethe)

Good morning!

Yesterday we talked about how you can end your day in the best way possible. A day with closed loops is a prized day for sure!

I’ll be approaching three distinct areas: email & PC, internet and online productivity tools.

> Email & PC:

I have a couple of very clear rules I don’t break because I know what that would mean for my productivity.

1. Inbox 0

This means that, at no point in time, will my inbox contain unread and unprocessed emails. Unfortunately, I know many people who leave all of their emails in their inbox and when they need something they just use “search”.

I don’t have a problem with finding a particular piece of information but, with the unconscious feeling of being

overwhelmed that you experience when you open your inbox and see hundreds and thousands of emails – read or unread, it becomes irksome. To me it's like having a couple of reams placed chaotically on my desk. The feeling is the same.

I suggest you create themed folders (clients, suppliers, administrator, personal, accounting, marketing, sales, John, Mary etc.) Almost any type of sorting is better than none!

The feeling of having an empty inbox is priceless!

It's a liberating feeling because you know nothing will evade your keen eye now – contrary to those moments when you have to sort through hundreds of read or unread emails…

Try it out and we'll talk afterwards… :)

2. If it's a level 1 or 2 email, answer it instantly (during the Pomodoro dedicated to networking).

If it's a level 3 or 4 then postpone answering it and place it at the end of your priorities list.

3. Answer with priority to those emails where you're in the "TO:" field because they directly address you but use the 1-4 ranking for priorities.

Leave the emails where you're in the "CC:" field for later on and completely ignore those where you're in the "BCC:" field.

4. Your desktop should have 80% free space. You should be able to see the background picture.

It's the same principle as the one for Inbox 0. Crowded icons instantaneously increase your stress level. Do yourself a favor and clean your desktop often to have peace of mind.

5. The ratio between folders and files should be a maximum of 5-to-1 (Word, Excel etc.)

Your desktop should only contain the file you're currently working on or the one you use daily.

Why? Because this means your files are sorted and not just crammed everywhere on your desktop.

In any case, if you have more than 10 folders on your desktop I highly doubt your organization and discipline.

Concentrate the information using a maximum of 10 folders. Ideally you should use between 5 and 7. You'll immediately feel like you're more in control over what you have to do.

> Internet

1. Personal email, Facebook and other similar applications are only allowed during the 5 minute break after your Pomodoro session.

It's absolutely critical, for your professional life, NOT to start your workday with your reward. Start with working hard for your

important projects and only afterwards reward yourself.

2. Your relaxation time should never be longer than the allotted time!

If you've decided something, discipline yourself to respect your own decisions. If you break your own promise,s your self esteem will drop fairly quickly. However, when you keep the promises you make to yourself your self confidence increases.

3. To determine exactly how much time you're wasting on the Internet use the Rescue Time App (https://www.rescuetime.com/).

It's a software that monitors your desktop and determines your level of productivity throughout the day. I still experience "A-HA!" moments and continue to use it. For some people, I promise this app will provide a sudden jolt back to reality...

> Online productivity tools

1. Evernote (https://evernote.com/)

It's my number 1 favorite.

I'm even writing this in Evernote, a software that can be synchronized online with any type of device from your PC or Mac. It also works with Windows, iOS and iPhone because it's compatible with computers, tablets and smartphones.

Evernote is a database hosted on a server where you can organize all of the information you need.

It gave me the peace of mind I needed because I knew that, even if my computer, phone or tablet were to break down, my information would be safe. Twice in my life I have lost everything on my computer and I've felt the pain both physically and mentally. I'm glad to get rid of this stress factor.

2. Dropbox (https://www.dropbox.com/)

It's the best file sharing software.

Especially when you're working on projects where you collaborate with someone else it helps out a lot when you don't have to send that person large files by email and interrupt them from their productive Pomodoro sessions.

3. WeTransfer (https://www.wetransfer.com/)

It's the best file transferring software.

I really like it because it's fast, you can transfer up to 2GB and your files are kept on their servers for 1 week.

Of course there are many other apps and programs that help out but the ones mentioned above constitute the necessary and sufficient minimum through which you can increase your online productivity.

TODAY’s To-Do List! (Now’s the best time to do it!)

1. Reread the list and decide what you can implement right away, over the course of just one Pomodoro session (for instance, identify the 5-7 folders, move the desktop files you’re not using anymore, sort your inbox etc). Go for these quick victories!

2. Establish a set of personal rules regarding your interaction with the online environment for entertainment purposes – how long, how often, when during the day etc. For this practice to work even better, find someone who wants to implement a similar shift to yours and monitor each other once per day.

3. Allot one Pomodoro session to explore the 3 pieces of software – Evernote, Dropbox and WeTransfer (if you’re not using them already). For each one you’ll find a presentation video and/or instructions. Start using them even if you don’t know ALL the details (be careful not to self sabotage yourself).

Good luck! See you tomorrow!

Day 27:

Weekly evaluation no. 4

“Don't say you don't have enough time. You have exactly the same number of hours per day that were given to Helen Keller, Pasteur, Michelangelo, Mother Teresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson, and Albert Einstein.” (H. Jackson Brown Jr.)

Hello!

This fourth week has come to a close!

I’m curious about how you evolved, what challenges you faced and what “A-ha!” moments you’ve had.

Ok, let’s see what you’ve learned this week.

Day 22: Delegating with spectacular results!

Essential idea:

You’ve learned about an elaborate but spectacularly effective delegation process. It might seem stuffy but once you go through it 3-4 times it will become easier. It will actually become harder not to follow it!

Day 23: The productive refusal

Essential idea:

A simple technique yet it has the potential to increase your productivity many times over. If you don't implement it, you have every chance of remaining the "professional fireman" who puts out fires in the office.

Day 24: How do you get over failure?

Essential idea:

You've learned the 2-step process through which you overcome failure. You've also reminded yourself that without a "why" you can't get "where" you want to.

Day 25: Daily revision

Essential idea:

You received 5 "golden" questions that will help you learn something new daily and make you evolve step by step in a predictable manner. It only takes 5 minutes to ask yourself these questions but their cumulative effects will already be taking place after only a couple of weeks.

Day 26: Online productivity: email, internet and productivity tools

Essential idea:

Maintaining your online productivity level has become a great challenge considering all the distractions that are out there.

Follow my advice and use the pieces of software I recommended to remain effective and efficient.

Ok, now **let's see how well you fared after your fourth week:**

1. On how many days (out of 5) did you practice the exercise for each lesson? (0-5) >
2. How many minutes, on average, did it take you to complete the daily exercise? >
3. What topic from this fourth week have you found most relevant or revealing? Why? >
4. How happy are you with the progress you've made? (1 – not happy at all; 10 – very happy) What was required to happen so that your score would have been 1-2 points higher? >
5. How dedicated are you to continue to improve your level of organization and discipline? (1 – not at all; 10 – very dedicated) >

Good luck! Have a great weekend!

Day 28 - Sunday Story:

Markita Andrews

The greatest sales woman in the world today does not mind if you call her a girl. That is because Markita Andrews has generated more than eighty thousand dollars selling Girl Scout cookies since she was seven years old.

Going door-to-door after school, the painfully shy Markita transformed herself into a cookie-selling dynamo when she discovered, at age 13, the secret of selling.

It starts with desire, A BURNING, WHITE-HOT DESIRE.

For Markita and her mother, who worked as a waitress in New York after her husband left them when Markita was eight years old, their dream was to travel the globe. “I will work hard to make enough money to send you to college,” her mother said one day. “You’ll go to college and graduate, you will make enough money to take you and me around the world. Okay?”

So at age 13 when Markita read in her Girl Scout magazine that the Scout who sold the most cookies would win an all-expenses-paid trip for two around the world, **she decided to sell all the Girl Scout cookies she could—more Girl Scout cookies than anyone in the world, ever.**

But desire alone was not enough to make her dream come true, Markita knew she needed a plan.

“Always wear your right outfit, your professional garb”, her aunt advised. “When you are doing business, dress like you are doing business. Wear your Girl Scout uniform. When you go up to people in their tenement buildings at 4:30 or 6:30 and especially on Friday night, ask for a big order. Always smile, whether they buy or not, always be nice. And don’t ask them to buy your cookies; ask them to invest.”

Lots of other scouts may have wanted that trip around the world. Lots of other Scouts may have had a plan. But only Markita went after her DREAM in her uniform each day. “Hi, I have a dream. I am earning a trip around the world for me and my mom by merchandising Girl Scout cookies”, she would say at the door. “Would you like to invest in one dozen or two dozen boxes of cookies?”

Markita sold 3,526 boxes of Girl Scout cookies that year and won her trip around the world.

Since then, she has sold more than 42,000 boxes of Girl Scout cookies, spoken at sales conventions across the country, starred in a Disney movie about her adventure and has co-authored the bestseller, How To Sell More Cookies, Condos, Cadillac’s, Computers…. And Everything Else.

Markita is no smarter and no more extroverted than thousands of other people, young and old, with dreams of

their own. The big difference is Markita has discovered the secret of selling: i.e. ASK, ASK, ASK!

Many people fail before they even begin because they fail to ask for what they want. The fear of rejection leads many of us to reject ourselves and our dreams long before anyone else ever has the chance--- no matter what we are selling.

"Actually everyone is selling something in a way. You are selling yourself everyday – in school, to your boss, to new people you meet", said Markita at 14. "My mother is a waitress: she sells the daily special. Mayors and presidents trying to get votes are selling… One of my teachers, who made geography so very interesting to her students, was really selling to her class. I see selling everywhere I look and selling is part of the whole world."

It takes courage to ask for what you want. Courage is not the absence of fear. It's doing what it takes despite one's fear. And as Markita has discovered, the more you ask, the easier it gets and it is also more fun.

Once, on live TV, the producer decided to give Markita her toughest selling challenge. Markita was asked to sell Girl Scout cookies to another guest on the show. "Would you like to invest in one dozen or two dozen boxes of Girl Scout cookies?" She asked.

"Girl Scout cookies? I don't buy any Girl Scout cookies", he replied. "I am a Federal Penitentiary Warden. I put 2,000 rapists, robbers, criminals, muggers, and child abusers to bed every night."

Unruffled, Markita quickly countered, “Mister, if you take some of these cookies, maybe you won’t be so mean and angry and evil. And, Mister, I think it would be a good idea for you to take some of these cookies back for everyone of your 2,000 prisoners, too,” Markita said.

The warden wrote a check.

Moral: The only real limits are the ones we create in our mind!

Have a pleasant Sunday! See you tomorrow!

Day 29:

Perseverance and decisive action (Stuart Jenkins)

“Mrs. Jenkins,” the grade school teacher announced to Stuart’s mother, “your son will never graduate from high school, let alone attend college. It’s because of his dyslexia, you see, he’s learning disabled.” Stuart sat in the slow class in the one-room schoolhouse in a little town in Nebraska where everyone knew everyone. The worst part was not that the town labeled him “dumb” and “stupid.” The worst part was that Stuart believed the labels. Until, that is, the day that everything changed for him.

When Stuart reached junior high age, he was given the opportunity to attend private school away from home, and it was there that the earlier labels that had been placed on him were gradually displaced. Not only did he become the school’s track star and champion runner, but the confidence he gained helped him distinguish himself academically as well.

Contrary to the earlier predictions, he not only graduated high school, but he became student body president and went on to graduate college with a 3.2 grade point average. And all because of his very unique concept of the word “discipline.” Stuart’s love for running prompted him to set a long-range goal: to qualify for the Olympic trials by running the Boston Marathon in two hours, nineteen minutes, and four seconds!

Beginning at age 15, every single day for eight years, Stuart ran in preparation for that great race. He did not miss one day in eight years! Would you say that was discipline? In fact, by the time Stuart reached Boston, his daily log indicated he had run exactly 26,000 miles in preparation for that one 26-mile race! That's 1,000 miles of preparation for every mile in the race! Here are his own words about what happened as he ran in the Boston marathon:

"Everything was going great until I got to the 17-mile mark– Heartbreak Hill, as it's affectionately called. It was as if somebody had turned on Bunsen burners under both my heels and I had 4-inch blisters on them. My shoes were full of blood. There was more pain than I could ever remember in my life. I had to ask myself, am I willing to take one more step on these feet? Then the answer came: "Stuart you are within six miles of reaching the goal you set eight years ago. The goal you have pursued for 26,000 miles!" And the power of the goal was much greater than the power of the pain. I kept going, climbing the next hill.

As I reached the crest of the hill I looked out and saw a huge digital clock. It read: TWO HOURS, EIGHTEEN MINUTES, 46 SECONDS. That meant only one thing. I had just eighteen seconds to get from there to the finish line! Then I heard a voice on the loudspeaker: Ladies and gentlemen, here comes Stuart Jenkins. He's the last runner who has a chance to qualify for the Olympic trials. Let's bring him on in. Twenty thousand people jumped to their feet and began cheering wildly. But my entire focus was on that digital clock! Tick. Tick. Tick. I'm not a sprinter,

but I believe I actually sprinted for the finish line, and in just fourteen seconds I was there, qualifying for the Olympics–by just FOUR SECONDS!"

Now ask yourself, which day should Stuart Jenkins have skipped in his training? Which day should he have allowed himself not to pursue his goal? What mile in those 26,000 miles of preparation should he not have run? What does the word "discipline" mean? It means freedom! It's not putting yourself in a box; it's putting yourself on top of the box, giving yourself a structure that can support you. The box is not a trap, a confinement, or a prison cell. It's a platform, a solid step that affords you a higher vantage point from which to view your possibilities. Eight years of running every single day–that was discipline for Stuart Jenkins. But that kind of discipline is what gives you freedom–freedom from mediocrity!

Think of discipline as the path to freedom–freedom from limitations! Clearly define your goal and focus on it. Don't let yourself quit too soon. And when you hit your "Heartbreak Hill," keep going!

See you tomorrow!

Day 30:

Recap and consolidation

“Smile, breathe and go slowly.” (Thich Nhat Hanh)

Good morning!

Today we have a very important activity to go through.

I’m talking about a recap so that you become very aware of the tools you received and the “technical specifications” that came with them.

Before I begin, let me tell what my intention was when I created this book.

First of all, **I wanted to lend you a helping hand with everything that’s already going on in your life.** I’m talking about work tasks, home chores and anything else that fills your day.

My intention was to help you “make room” for new and important activities by increasing your productivity expressed through effectiveness and efficiency.

You already have to finish what you’ve already started so it’s completely unrealistic for me to tell you “stop doing what you have to do, just do these things”.

So **step number 1- Organization and discipline with regard to what already exists.** You've already freed up some time and energy for more important activities – 1st and 2nd level from the Priority Pyramid.

Step number 2- Clarifying your destination and then going down the road in a well-organized and disciplined manner. To successfully accomplish this second step my next book will be about The Strategic Life Planning.

But let's begin the recap:

We started the first week by talking about motivations.

We spoke about "why discipline and organization are important".

I helped you gain access to the habits of successful people and I invited you to find your own motivations.

You created your own definitions for these two concepts and you evaluated your starting point with the help of 15 questions regarding personal discipline.

Then we discussed the tension that arises between motivations and fears hidden in the shape of excuses. And together we saw that when you have a higher purpose for doing something, overcoming obstacles becomes easier.

During the second week we concentrated on what could slow you down or stop you from becoming more organized and disciplined.

The first step was getting to know the three enemies of Organization and Discipline: “Frequent interruptions”; “Start & Stop” and “Unrelated activities”.

We then continued with the criteria through which you establish your daily priorities. The Priorities Pyramid is an extraordinary tool that you can use to figure out, at any given time, if you’re using your time and energy in the best possible way.

The next step was to “dust off” the old paradigms that slowed you down and adopt the new ones used by top performers.

Later, we talked about balance and harmony and how they can be achieved through nourishing your 4 intelligences.

We ended the week with the open loops audit or, how I like to call it, “the Terminator of black holes that destroy personal energy”.

During the third week, I revealed to you ways in which you can increase your productivity.

I began with order as a daily natural working state.

We then covered the Pomodoro technique that is one of the top 3 best productive methods there is.

We continued with training your ability to concentrate in 5 simple steps.

We concluded the week with simple ways in which you can collect ideas and tasks, grouping them afterwards in blocks and

executing them in an optimum sequence of Pomodoro sessions.

And, last but not least, we agreed that the first part of your day (30-120 minutes) should be reserved for strategic thinking and planning the day ahead.

During the fourth week, we added some more essential resources to complete the arsenal of tools that make life easier and more pleasant.

We started with the demystification of the delegation process. There are many ways to delegate but few of them actually work. Delegate “cleanly” and you’ll make your life easier. Also, if something is being delegated to you, make sure the perfect context is created for you to perform while doing that activity.

We continued with the productive refusal and how to overcome failure.

Another essential element for organization and discipline that we talked about was the daily revision. Those 5 minutes you allot in the evening will make a huge difference for you in the months and years to come. It may not seem like a lot but the cumulative effect is impressive!

And we concluded the week with a few ideas and suggestions on how to approach the complex virtual world in an organized and discipline fashion. It has become quite easy for you to get distracted and then “wake up” after “being on a different planet” for hours...

All of these tools complement each other and help you stay organized, disciplined and productive day after day.

I want to resume what I said in the beginning.

This book has a lot of top instruments to help you increase your organization and discipline.

But, even more than that, **I believe they help you structure your mind differently.**

This new way allows you to obtain clarity, energy, self confidence and significance. In other words, it allows you to nourish all 4 of your intelligences.

Like I said, **I wanted to help you "see the light" in your life.**

And after you've stabilized yourself, I wanted to help you plan your next destination not because "you have to" or "there's no other choice" but because "it's your choice" without being pressured by external factors.

Organization and discipline are synonymous with taking your power back and becoming the master of your life again day after day.

I don't know if there are any sensations that are more unpleasant than the one where you feel you're losing control over your life and you're getting carried away.

This is why I ask you to study and apply Organization and Discipline. Transform them into daily practices and your life will get better…

I’m here for you if you have any questions or you need more information.

Have a productive day!

The Next Steps and How To Avoid the Rubber Band Effect!

“You don’t have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great.” (Joe Sabah)

Hello!

We have now reached the end of this journey that promises to bring you generous benefits in the weeks, months and years to come.

Thank you for trusting me to be your guide throughout this exploration!

I trust you received valuable information during these days and you also developed essential abilities you’ll use for a long time from here on out… and who knows? Maybe forever!

I have the firm belief, not just for this context, that each ending is, in fact, an opportunity to begin a new exploration from a higher step.

In other words, we evolve, but from a different level of understanding things. And this continuous evolution is one of the characteristics of happiness from the way I understand life.

During the next couple of days, it would help you greatly to revise certain themes and ingrain what you’ve found to be useful. It’s an

opportunity to transform the changes you've begun to implement into permanent ones.

When implementing change "the rubber band theory" applies.

Concretely, when you start to make changes, you're distancing yourself from the place you once were.

However, the inertia of the system you're a part of will oppose these changes by creating "tension".

It's like holding a rubber band with one finger and pulling its head with another finger.

The rubber band wears thin but most times it has the ability to pull you back.

In these cases, to stabilize the shift and make it permanent, you need to do something as many times as it takes to "break the rubber band"; in other words, until the inertia of "what was" is overcome and "what is" becomes stable in its newest form and context.

This is why consistent practice is so important... If you don't create momentum to break the rubber band it will pull you back and nullify any type of progress.

I wish you the best of luck!

Dan Luca

http://www.5amhacks.com

P.S. I would love to hear from you! While it's *easy* to connect over Facebook, Twitter or other social media sites, often it's better to have one-on-one conversations with readers like you.

So I encourage you to reach out over email and say hi!

Simply write here:

dan@5amcoaching.com

To get started, I would love to hear about the one thing you'll do... this week... to turn this information into action.

Could You Help?

Before you go, I'd like to say "thank you" for purchasing my book.

I know you could have picked from dozens of books on habit development, but you took a chance with my system.

I'd love to hear your opinion about my book. In the world of book publishing, there are few things more valuable than honest reviews from a wide variety of readers.

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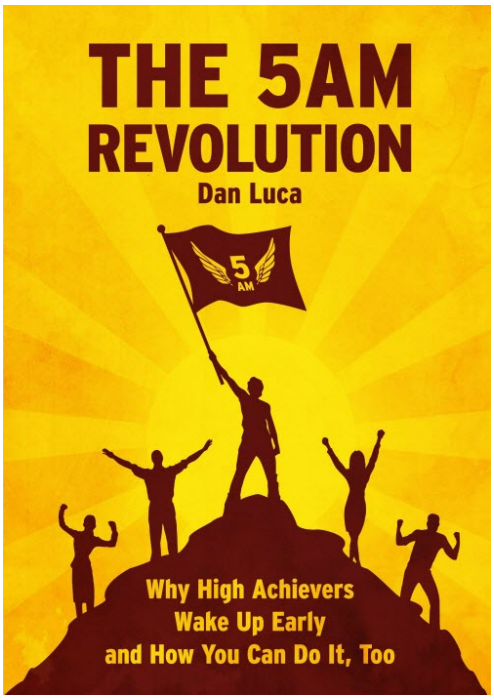
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